



Western Perspective on the Sikh Religion



Darshan Singh

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Dedicated to
Dr. Ganda Singh
(1900-1987)

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CHAPTER 1

PROLEGOMENON

Ever since the beginning of the present phase of a more protracted and intimate encounter of the West with India lasting over two centuries, there has been a continuous flow of Western writings on the land, its people and the mores. The Westerners came to India lured by the exotic beauty and fabulous wealth of the country, with the hope of establishing trade relations and trade centres. Having got their trade concerns established, they developed political interests as well. Taking advantage of the prevailing disorderly conditions in the country, they became a political power. In the wake of political authority came missionaries to spread the Gospel.

Since they came from an altogether different geographical, social, cultural and religious background, their perspective or point of view came to be called Western, making the distinction from the Eastern. The broad academic discipline which emerged as an attempt to study and explore the Eastern themes has come to be called Orientalism, again based on the geographical distinction, in opposition to Occidentalism.

Motivated originally by political and evangelistic considerations, the Western studies have over the years grown into an academic discipline. For the last two centuries, the Western literary and scholarly tradition has steadily developed and has its own remarkable continuity and inner dynamism.

The early Western writers have written on almost every conceivable aspect of the Punjab, as indeed they have done on other parts and regions of India. Concerning the Punjab, then an independent kingdom, their records are available on its political and administrative systems, military organisation, forms of revenue and trade, geography, climate, agriculture, industry, ethnic traits, cultural manners, secular pursuits and religion.

The present study aims at focusing mainly on those

Western writings which are devoted to the description and exposition of the Sikh religion, with a view to elucidating their perspective. It is a very vague demarcation, as there is nothing in the Sikh history which can be properly grasped without the knowledge of their faith. Even their politics cannot be understood without reference to their faith. Thus, it is very difficult to differentiate their faith from any other aspect of their life and activity. However, the present study makes this arbitrary demarcation in order to explore the Western perspective on Sikhism, in some depth. Western writings on the Sikhs' history and on other aspects of their life have received sufficient attention at the hands of scholars, but no systematic attempt has so far been made to explore Western understanding and exposition of Sikhism, except for a few scattered short papers. The present attempt thus is the first systematic and elaborate one in this direction. It is conceded however, that it may be subject to all the limitations of a pioneer effort.

The present study embraces works, mainly in English, in the Sikh religious tradition by Europeans and Americans during the last two centuries. The studies on the Sikhism available in Portuguese, German and French languages are not irrelevant in this context, and we shall be referring to them also where English translations are available. Since we have no facility in the works of these languages, which have not been translated into English, will have to be omitted.

Interestingly, the regular Western records on Sikhism are as old as on Hinduism. Colonel A.L.H. Polier was the first Western writer to have acquired, for the first time, a complete set of Vedas. Charles Wilkins is the first Western writer to have translated the Bhagavadgītā into English, for the first time. Western writings on Sikhs also begin with these two writers. Colonel Polier wrote a paper on the Sikhs, and Charles Wilkins described the religion of the Sikhs on the basis of his personal observations of a prayer session which he attended in Gurdwara Patna Sahib (Bihar), the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh.

Because of their distinctive character, the Western writings on Sikhism form an independent tradition of interpretations. These writings differ greatly in methodological perspective and orientation from the traditional Sikh interpretative literature. The Western writings on Sikhism are most significant, for through

them the tradition came to be introduced to the Western people. These writings are also significant in as much as they prepared the way for making a comparative study of Sikhism with the Semitic religions. These writings have also greatly influenced the orientation and methodology of Sikh studies as a whole. The distinctive identity of Sikhism among the Indian religions came to be asserted and emphasized through these writings. On these and many other counts, the Western perspective on Sikhism forms a very significant dimension of the Sikh studies.

Primarily, religion is an area which is not easily accessible to the outsider, foreigner or non-participant. The inner meaning of a religion unfolds only through participation; by following the prescribed path and discipline. This fact is now being increasingly realized by scholars working in this area. Elaborating the nature of this problem with respect to Western understanding of the Eastern religions, Frazier maintains, "Comprehending an Eastern religious tradition requires immense discipline of mind and a considerable capacity for openmindedness. Westerners can amass information about Eastern religious life simply by cataloging the facts in an encyclopedic fashion. Such 'factual' knowledge, however, reveals only the husks of oriental thought and ritual; it is not equivalent to comprehending either its significance or meaning. An adequate understanding of the religious traditions of the East requires that its human significance be appropriated. The examination of the non-Western religions involves an inquiry into the hopes, aspirations, value-commitments, and world views of religious persons in the East. The 'externals' of the various Eastern religions—their myths, beliefs, rituals—must be approached with a view to discovering what these 'externals' mean to the persons who produce them, participate in them, and respond to them."¹

The Western writers' attempt to interpret and understand Sikhism is an outsider's or non-participant's endeavour. As the majority of the writers were Christians, it is primarily a Western, Christian perspective on Sikhism. Being a Christian attempt at studying a non-Christian tradition it takes the form of an encounter or dialogue of religions, and in this sense it becomes part of the discipline of comparative religions. The present

1. Allie M. Frazier, *Issues in Religion: A Book of Readings* (New York: American Book Company, 1969), p. 176.

study, in its endeavour to comprehend the Western perspective on Sikhism, shall have basically significant and academically relevant dimensions; an examination of non-participant's external view of the faith from a participant's internal view.

In addition to the prolegomenon, the main study is divided into three broad Chapters. In the second Chapter attempt have been made to identify the existent literature devoted to the description and elaboration of Sikhism. Brief accounts of the authors and their writings have also been included. An historical outline of the literature has been traced with a view to delineating the growth and dynamism of the Western perspective on Sikhism.

The third Chapter aims at elaborating the Western perspective on the Sikh tradition. It opens with a brief discussion on the process of image formation when the people of different communities interact and analyse the nature of changing Western perspective on the Orient. The bases will be some of the scholarly works, now available. Further, a detailed study of the basic issues concerning the Sikh Tradition will be attempted as they have been explained and analysed by the Western writers. It will take up questions such as the origin of Sikhism, image of the founder of Sikhism, its relation to the historical background, evolution of the Sikh tradition, its place among the World Religions and the present state of Western interest in its study.

The fourth Chapter continues on, with the same survey, now in relation to the Sikh faith. Beginning with a brief description of the salient features of the Western perspective, it goes on to tracing Western writers' description of the Sikh beliefs and practices. In the Résumé, main findings of the study have been summed up.

The approach followed in this study is mainly historical and theological. The exposition of Sikh theology by the Western writers has been studied from the historical perspective. But it is also phenomenological and comparativist. It is phenomenological in the sense that the Western writers' view have been represented in their own words. Because of a large number of such quotations, even longer ones have not been indented in the text. On some important issues, comparative analysis has also been attempted to clarify the meanings. The

approach is also dialogical to the extent that it aims at unveiling the Western understanding of a non-Western religious tradition.

The present study is largely based on my Ph.D. dissertation prepared under the supervision of Dr. Ganda Singh, submitted to the Punjabi University, Patiala. I am fully aware of the fact that pioneering work in any area cannot be free from many limitations. The present one is not an exception. However, it is being published in the hope that in addition to providing an over-view of the Western Perspective on the Sikh Religion, the important information collected here would greatly benefit those interested in the further exploration of the area almost untapped so far.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE WESTERN WRITINGS ON THE SIKH RELIGION

ORIGINS OF THE INTEREST

The origin of Westerners' interest in Sikhism cannot be established with any certainty. It seems that many factors joined to attract their attention towards the Sikh community and faith, intellectual curiosity to know about strange peoples and Westerners' interest in the general history of mankind were the reasons which were always present to invite Westerners' interest in the Indian people.¹ However, it can be maintained with a considerable amount of certainty that they got interested in the Sikh people because of the political reasons. Their first ever serious encounter with the Sikhs was not as a religious community but as a political power. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, when the Britishers encountered the Sikhs they were growing as a political power in the north western part of India as a potent threat to the political ambitions of the Britishers in India.² It was at first indirectly that they came to learn about the Sikh religion as one of the most potent factors and the basic source of inspiration behind their political strength. It may also be mentioned here that the earlier accounts of the Sikhs are the results of the individual efforts, though taken up

1. These reasons have been elaborated at some length by J.S. Grewal, 'Early British Interests in India's Past', *Medieval India : History and Historians* (Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1975), pp. 1-11.
2. These reasons will be elaborated in the course of our discussion. However, the inquisitive readers are requested to turn their attention to the following works : Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (Calcutta : Indian Studies : Past and Present, 1962), p. 1; Fauja Singh (ed.), *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs* (New Delhi : Oriental Publishers and Distributors, 1978), p. 1; Gianeshwar Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab* (New Delhi : Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p. 2.

at the behest and expressed wish of the authorities of the British East India Company. They are, in no way systematic accounts, and their only merit is their being pioneer efforts. It was only after the efforts of many dedicated individuals over two centuries that the Western studies of Sikhism have come to assume a distinct character of their own. Even among the Western writers a variety of views and a process of gradual development of the Western perspective on Sikhism can easily be traced. Having made these few comments of general nature we can now turn to a brief survey of the Western writings on Sikhism.

Before we take up this survey, two important and relevant points need to be stated here. The first, as already mentioned is that, this is not an exhaustive survey of the Western writings or parts thereof on the Sikhs. We have selected only those writings which are chiefly devoted to elaborate one aspect or the other of the Sikh faith and tradition. Many writings devoted to the political history of the Sikhs have been omitted. The second point is that, although the history of the Western writings on the Sikhs can be divided according to the political history of the times, and some of the changes in the Western writers' attitude can be interpreted in terms of the changing trends of history and change in the mutual relations of the Westerners and the Sikhs, we have avoided this type of classification in order to give some credit to those individual writers who have attempted to remain objective in the face of strained mutual relations of the two communities.

EARLIER REFERENCES

The earlier extant reference to the Sikhs in any Western writing is a contemporary reference to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev found in a private letter of Father Jerome Xavier, S.J. of September 25, 1606 from Lahore, addressed to the Jesuit Provincial Superior of Goa, of which Father Gaspar Fernandes was then incharge.³ Father Jerome Xavier, S.J. was one of the

3. E.R. Hambye, S.J., 'A Contemporary Jesuit Document on Guru Arjan Dev's Martyrdom', *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh* (editors Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier) (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976), pp. 113-18; Hambye's paper gives a very well documented and exhaustive survey of the contents of the letter including a new translation of the relevant portions ■

grand-nephews of St. Francis Xavier. Born in 1549, he became a Jesuit in 1568 and reached Goa in 1581. He worked in India for forty years and died on June 25, 1617. He spent twenty years at the Mughal Courts mostly at Agra.⁴ The Jesuit missionaries had a house and a church in Lahore since 1597. Father Jerome Xavier left Agra for Lahore five days after Jahangir and had a meeting with Jahangir at Lahore where he was received by the Christians after eight years of absence.⁵ In addition to a reference to Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom, the letter contains other varied information regarding the life of the Christians in the two cities of Agra and Lahore, the death of Akbar, assumption of power by Jahangir, revolt of prince Khusru, his meeting with Guru Arjan Dev, Khusru's defeat, Jahangir's arrival at Lahore, etc.⁶

The contents of the original letter were rearranged by Father Ferdinand Guerreiro, S.J. (d. 1617) and published in Lisbon in 1609 in Portuguese language. It was reprinted in Coimbra in 1931.⁷ It was this version of Father Ferdinand Guerreiro which is found in the English translation of C.H. Payne.⁸ Ganda Singh has given another translation by John A. D'Silva which again is the translation of the letter as rearranged by Father Ferdinand Guerreiro.⁹ According to Ganda Singh the account of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev given in the letter does not agree with the facts mentioned in other contemporary sources, hence, it appears to be based on second hand information.¹⁰

The second important reference to the Sikhs in the

of the original letter, bearing on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. We have largely depended on him regarding this first reference to the Sikhs in any Western writing. Ganda Singh's introductory remarks to this reference are also important as he makes a comparative study of all the earlier accounts regarding the martyrdom before suggesting the possible reasons. See Ganda Singh, *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 47-48.

4. E.R. Hambye, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

8. C.H. Payne (trans.), *Jahangir and Jesuits* (London : George Rutledge and Sons, 1930). The translation of the relevant portions referring to Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom occurs at pp. 11-12.

9. John A. D'Silva, 'The Rebellion of Prince Khusro according to Jesuit Sources', *Journal of Indian History*, Volume V, 1927, p. 278.

10. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*. pp. 45-47.

Western writings is again found in a letter, this time an official one. It was over a century after the earlier one. Like the first reference, it also refers to the massacre of the Sikhs at the hands of the Mughals, but unlike the earlier one it is an eye-witness account of the execution of hundreds of the Sikhs. The paragraph which refers to the arrest and massacre of the Sikhs is found in a letter dated Delhi, March 10, 1716 written by Messrs John Surman and Edward Stephenson to the Hon'ble Robert Hedges, President and Governor of Fort William, etc; Council in Bengal.¹¹ John Surman and Edward Stephenson constituted the Embassy of British Governor of Fort William at the Court of Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar known as the Surman embassy.¹² The letter is found in the Madras Diary and Consultation Book for 1715 to 1719, No. 87, Range 237, in the India Office, London. It was reproduced in C.R. Wilson's *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Volume II, Part II (Calcutta, 1911), pp. 96-98 and in J.T. Wheelers, *Early Records of British India* (London : Trubner and Co., 1878), p. 180.¹³ Both John Surman and Edward Stephenson were eye-witness to the execution of the companions of Banda Singh when they were being executed in Chandani Chowk at the rate of a hundred each day from March 5 onwards. These officials have paid glowing tribute to the great martyrs of the young faith in the following words : "It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatised from his new formed religion."¹⁴

We have mentioned these two references only because of their historical value, being the contemporary records, having bearing on two very significant turning points in the Sikh history. However, these two casual references do not in any way mark the beginning of the Western studies of Sikhism. It was only in the last two decades of eighteenth century that the Westerners felt the need to take a serious note of the community and the basic sources of inspiration behind their power. This was the time when the Sikhs had become a dominant power in the northwestern part of India.

11. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*. p. 49.

12. Khurana, *British Historiography of the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 1.

13. Ganda Singh (ed.), *op.cit.*

14. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

POLIER'S PAPER

Antonie Louis Henri Polier's paper on the Sikhs is perhaps the first known brief but connected account of the Sikh people written by an European. Col. A.L.H. Polier was born at Lausanne in February 1741.¹⁵ His father Jacques H.E. Polier was of French extraction, naturalized in Switzerland. Polier came to India in 1757 and entered in the service of East India Company as Assistant Engineer at Calcutta, and was promoted as Chief Engineer with the rank of Captain in 1762. Being non-Englishman he could not get further promotion but at the behest of Warren Hastings he accepted deputation with the Nawabs of Oudh, Shuja and Asaf-ud-Daula as architect and engineer. However, because of the hostilities of the enemies of Warren Hastings, he had to resign from that job. He had to seek employment under the Mughal Emperor for sometime. Hastings readmitted him in Company's service in 1782 as Lieutenant Colonel and stationed him at Lucknow. He finally retired from the job in 1789 and returned to Europe to settle down near Avignon in France. There he was murdered by robbers or revolutionaries on February 9, 1795.

Lucknow at that time was a great centre of cultural activities and learning. There he got interested in Indian History and Religions. He collected a large number of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, which he later presented to British Museum, London. The Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris and Bibliotheque Cantonale of Lausanne, Vand, Switzerland have large number of manuscripts annotated by Polier. The Pote Collection at Eton College (England) was mainly made by him. He was the first European to have succeeded in securing a complete set of the Vedas. The above facts show the literary interests of the person. His paper 'The Siques' or 'History of the Seekers' was read on December 20, 1787 before the members of Asiatic Society of Bengal, of which he himself was also an elected member.

The paper it seems was never published but it is preserved in the India Office Library, London (Orme Ms., XIX, pp. 73-83).

15. The information about the life of Colonel Polier is based on Ganda Singh (ed.) *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 53-55 and C.E. Buckland (ed.), *Dictionary of Indian Biography* (Delhi : Indological Book House, 1971), p. 339.

It was with the efforts of Ganda Singh that a photostat copy of the paper was acquired and its publication arranged, along with other earlier accounts of the European writers on Sikhism.¹⁶ Although the paper was read in 1787 it was written several years before its presentation. The internal evidence suggests that the paper was written in 1780.¹⁷ George Forster has quoted a long passage about the Sikhs from a memoir in a letter which according to his information was written by Colonel Polier in Delhi, in 1777.¹⁸ Except a few minor changes of the words the passage is the same as found in the paper.¹⁹

Colonel Polier's interest in the Sikhs goes back to 1776, and his views about them remained unchanged. How Colonel Polier became interested in the Sikhs has not been explained satisfactorily. It seems certain that he was not asked by any official of the Company to collect this information, and he did not take any initiative to propagate his knowledge of the Sikhs. The internal evidences strongly suggest that he took to collecting information about the Sikhs at his own and wrote it down to recommend to the Nawab of Oudh and the Britishers to extirpate the 'evil' that the Sikhs were to him. His strong prejudice against the Sikh people has also remained unexplained. One reason may be his association with the Nawabs of Oudh and the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, who viewed the rise of the Sikhs as an evil. The second reason as suggested by Ganda Singh, may be the one-sided reporting about the Sikhs by the Mughal officials against whom Sikhs had been struggling for over eighty years.²⁰ However, these reasons do not sufficiently explain his attitude. George Forster with almost the same information at his disposal arrived at totally different conclusion about the character and nature of the Sikh people. A study of Colonel Polier's attitude towards the Indian people based on all of his writings may lead to some just conclusion.

Colonel Polier's paper touches upon almost all the important aspects of the contemporary Sikh society, their origin

16. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 53.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 64 (Footnotes nos, 24, 35).

18. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England* (Patiala: Languages Department, Punjab, 1970), Vol. I, pp. 333-35.

19. Ganda Singh (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 65-66.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

and progress of their faith, their struggles for independence, their religious and civil institutions, their dress and diet, occupations, etc. It contains a number of factual errors which are quite natural in the face of paucity of authentic information, absence of personal contacts with the Sikhs and ignorance of their language. The only merit of the paper is as mentioned earlier, its being first ever connected with a European through brief account of the Sikh people. The paper is also significant for its author's independent point of view about the Sikhs, which secures it a safe place among other contemporary writings.

CHARLES WILKIN'S LETTER

Almost contemporaneous with Polier's is another brief account of the Sikhs—'The Seekers and their College at Patna' by Sir Charles Wilkins. This account of the Sikhs' place of worship and study at Patna, the birth-place of Guru Gobind Singh, and their prayer and beliefs by a great and pioneer Orientalist has been ignored by the historians. But so far as an accurate notice by any Westerner, of the Sikhs' religious beliefs and practices is concerned, this is the first most significant description, based on personal observations.

Charles Wilkins was born in 1749 or 1750. He was the son of famous Walter Wilkins.²¹ He came to India (Bengal) at the age of twenty, in 1770, and entered into the Company's service as a writer. He was the first Englishman to acquire a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit, and published a grammar of it, in 1779. In 1785 he translated the Bhagavadgītā under the patronage of Warren Hastings. He prepared the first Bengali and Persian types and set up a printing press for Oriental languages. He was the chief associate with Sir William Jones in founding the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. He also established the well known series of *Asiatic Researches*, at Calcutta. He returned to England in 1786 and published the translation of the *Hitopadesa* or *Fables of Pilpai* and Kalidas's famous drama *Shakuntla*. In 1800, he was made the custodian of the Oriental

21. The account of his life is based on the *Dictionary of Indian Biography* (ed. C.E. Buckland), pp. 451-52; Ganda Singh (Introduction), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 69-70.

manuscripts taken away from the library of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam. He was the first Librarian of the India House Library, London, and was appointed visitor of Haileybury and Addiscombe in the Oriental Department. In 1808, he produced another Sanskrit Grammar. He was also a great scholar of Persian language, and in 1806 edited *Richardson's Persian and Arabic Dictionary*. In addition to these works he wrote a large number of papers on Indian subjects which created a good deal of interest in England about the Indian people. His services to the cause of Oriental learning have been well recognised. The University of Oxford conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Civil Law (D.C.L.) and the Royal Asiatic Society of Literature gave him their medal as 'Princeps Literature Sanskritcae'. He became an associate of the French Institute, and King George IV knighted him in 1833 and gave him the badge of the Guelphic Order. He was also an LL.D. (Legum Doctor = Doctor of Laws) and Fellow of the Royal Society. He died on May 13, 1836.

At Calcutta, Wilkins chanced to meet a Sikh gentleman who informed him about the Gurdwara and *Sangat* at Patna. On his way from Calcutta to Benaras, Wilkins stopped at Patna and visited the Sikh place of worship (Takhat Siri Harmandir Sahib, the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh). There he attended the worship session at the Gurdwara called college by him. He penned down in a very lively manner his observations and other information which he could acquire during his two hours stay about their beliefs and origin. He communicated the same observations to the Secretary Asiatic Society, on March 1, 1781 from Benaras.²² These observations of Charles Wilkins were published in the *Asiatic Researches* in 1788, now reprinted.²³ Charles Wilkins was conscious of the elementary nature of his information about the Sikhs, but he communicated to the Secretary in the hope that it may provide a clue or inspire someone for further research on them.²⁴ His observations, though very brief are very important from the point of view of a Westerners' interest in the religion of the Sikhs. This infact is the first instance of a Westerners' genuine interest in the

22. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

23. A.C. Lyall (ed.), *Asiatic Researches* (New Delhi : Cosmo Publications, 1976), Vol. I, pp. 246-49.

24. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 71.

religion of the Sikhs, and it is for the first time that the Sikhs attracted the attention of any Westerner not as a political power but as a religious community.

BROWNE'S TRACT

It was the time when the ever increasing power of the Sikhs was posing an immediate threat to the declining powers of Delhi and Oudh. Information about the Sikhs' strength, resources, disposition and constitution was therefore much needed. Major James Browne, agent of Warren Hastings at the Court of Shah Alam II was the first Englishman to be asked by the authorities to collect every possible information about the Sikhs. During his stay at Delhi, Major James Browne succeeded in producing first regular treatise on the Sikhs and submitted it later to John Motteux, Chairman of the Court of Directors for the affairs of United East India Company on September 17, 1787, giving it the title *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs*.²⁵ This paper alongwith another paper by him, entitled 'Description of the Jungle Terry Districts' submitted earlier on June 20, 1787, to the Chairman of the Court, were published under the order of the Court under the title, *India Tracts*, in 1788.²⁶

James Browne joined the East India Company's army in 1765 at the age of 21 as a Cadet. He was commissioned as Ensign on November 10, 1765, became a Lieutenant on May 2, 1767 and Captain on June 30, 1771. He attracted the attention of Warren Hastings, and was appointed his aide-de-camp in 1772. He was appointed Collector of the Jungle Terai districts in 1774 and served there for six years. He was promoted to the rank of Major on January 19, 1781. In August 1782, James Browne was sent as a Personal Agent to the Imperial Court of Delhi.²⁷

Browne's mission to Delhi was to assist Nawab Vazir Asaf-ud-Daula and to assure Shah Alam of the attachment of the Company to his person and interests.²⁸ Browne was instructed

25. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 11.

26. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, has given the name of the title as *Indian Tracts*, p. 56.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

28. Ganda Singh (ed.), *op.cit.*, p 3.

to keep aloof from the factional politics at the Court. But contrary to the instructions, because of his strong convictions, he started taking active part in the factional politics at the Court, first associating with one group then with the other. He also advocated a strong anti-Sikh alliance. He went to the extent of extending an invitation to the Marathas against the Sikhs. However, he was persuaded against this project by Shafi Khan (Shafi Khan was a relative of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula and a minister) by showing him that the Maratha leader could pose a greater danger to the British dominion than the (Sikh) marauders from the North.²⁹ His activities and his political sagacity was not very much appreciated by his masters and the diplomatic mission proved to be a failure. Warren Hastings left India in February 1785, and his successor, Sir John Macpherson, recalled Browne on March 1, 1785.³⁰ Browne did not reconcile to this and returned to England in 1786. On Macpherson's arrival in England, Browne called upon him. He wanted to elicit a public apology from him. On Macpherson's refusal, Browne challenged him to a duel which was fought at Hyde Park. Both escaped unhurt. Browne was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on February 2, 1788 and he returned to India. He married at Calcutta one Miss Catherine Charlotte Raper to whom was born their only son, James Edward Browne. Major James Browne died at Dinapore on June 22, 1792 at the age of 48.³¹

Browne's paper *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs*, which he submitted to the Chairman of the Court of Directors was not an original paper. It was based on a Devanagari manuscript abridged for Major Browne in Persian language from where he himself translated it into English. The Persian manuscript according to Ganda Singh was *Risālā-i-Nānak Shāh* by Budh Singh Arora of Lahore written in collaboration with Lala Ajaib Singh Suraj of Maler (Kotla).³² Ganda Singh further informs us that according to the colophon of the *Risālā dar Ahwāi-i-Nānak Shāh Darwesh* in the Aligarh

29. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 3.

30. Krishan Dayal Bhargava (ed.), *Browne Correspondence* John Macpherson to Major Browne, Calcutta, March 1, 1785, No. 130, p. 237.

31. Ganda Singh (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 5.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Muslim University, Abdus Salam Section, *Tārikh-i-Afghānan*, No. 156/22, Budh Singh Arora Lahori was a *mulāzim*, a servant (evidently, a clerk), of James Browne.³³ To this translation Browne added a brief introduction giving some general information about the manners and customs of the Sikhs which he collected from independent sources. His introduction³⁴ to the translation is more important, because he gives his own observations about the nature of religious and political institutions of the Sikhs in this. His conclusions about the origin, growth and character of the Sikhs are totally different from that of Colonel Polier. His translation of the Persian manuscript contains innumerable factual mistakes. It is relevant only because it has been considerably relied upon by the later Western writers such as John Malcolm, W.L.M'Gregor and Joseph D. Cunningham.³⁵

LETTER BY FORSTER

George Forster is another contemporary of Colonel Polier and Major James Browne who has produced a short but well connected account of the Sikhs. This account is found in the form of a detailed letter written from Kashmir in 1783 to Mr. Gregory at Lucknow.³⁶ It was later on published in 1798 in his two-volume account: *A Journey from Bengal to England*. George Forster was a civil servant on the Madras establishment of the East India Company. He was a man of great adventure and a scholar of considerable merit.³⁷ He set on a long and arduous overland journey on May 23, 1782 from Calcutta to England. H.S. Bhatia informs us that George Forster was selected by Warren Hastings for his scholarly aptitude to proceed to Punjab for collecting authentic information and writings about the Sikhs.³⁸ Bhatia further relates that he passed

33. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 2.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-19.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

38. H.S. Bhatia (ed.), *Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in Punjab*, (New Delhi : Deep & Deep Publications, 1981), p. 12; The learned editor has not informed us about the source of his information. Fauja Singh is of the opinion —

through the North-Eastern hilly tracts of the Punjab in February, March and April 1783, disguised as a Turkish traveller due to fear of the Sikhs.³⁹ The complete account of George Forster's journey is in the form of a collection of letters. In addition to some occasional references to the Sikhs in other letters, George Forster has devoted a full letter (No. XI) to the account of the Sikhs.⁴⁰ George Forster died at Nagpur on an embassy to the Marhattas.⁴¹

George Forster's account of the Sikhs is partially based on the information supplied to him by Colonel Polier and partially on his own observations about the Sikhs while travelling through their territories.⁴² From the point of view of factual history, Forster's account is an improvement over the earlier accounts of Colonel Polier and Major Browne.⁴³ His account has found favour among the Sikhs as an objective and sympathetic description. He was consciously attempting to produce such an impartial account,⁴⁴ and has succeeded in it to a considerable degree. Forster's account begins with origin of the Sikh faith but his comments on the contemporary religious and civil institutions, the character of the Sikhs, the strength and weaknesses of the community are more enlightening. They are based on his deep understanding of men and manners, and penetrating insight into the truth of history. Forster like Browne and Polier was fully conscious of the close relationship of the religion and politics of the Sikhs and he has tried to describe these two aspects in relation to each other.

SKETCH BY MALCOLM

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the political situation

► that Forster wrote about the Sikhs at the express wish of Mr. Gregory to whom the letter is addressed; *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 13.

39. H.S. Bhatia, *Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in Punjab*, p. 12.

40. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, pp 291-340. Other occasional references to the Sikhs in other letters are at pages (first print), Vol. I (128-30, 199, 227-28), and vol. II (83, 88).

41. C.E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 151.

42. George Forster, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp. XII (Preface), and p. 333.

43. We are not sure whether or not the information collected by Major Browne was available to Mr. George Forster.

44. Forster, *op.cit.*, p. x (Preface).

in the North-west India had undergone a sea of change. The Maratha power was defeated and Delhi was occupied by the Britishers. The Sikhs had already consolidated their hold over the territories extending from river Indus to Jamuna. The Britishers' boundaries were extended to the Jamuna and they became immediate neighbours of the Sikhs.⁴⁵ The personal contacts with the Sikhs now became inevitable. It was as a result of these first ever close personal contacts that Lt. Col. John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* was written.⁴⁶

John Malcolm was born at Burnfoot in the parish of Westerkirk, Dumfriesshire on May 2, 1769.⁴⁷ He studied at Westerkirk, but because of his father, George Malcolm's financial difficulties, could not get much formal education. His maternal uncle John Pasley, a rich London merchant took him to London and after a brief period of schooling produced him before the Directors of the East India Company, who commissioned him in the army after some initial hesitation because of his tender age.⁴⁸ Malcolm arrived in Madras in 1783 at the age of fourteen. After a few years' service in the army he was promoted to join diplomatic service. He learnt Persian and devoted his spare time to the study of books on history and literature in order to make up for his deficiencies in formal education. He held many important diplomatic positions which include governorship of Bombay Presidency from November 1828 to December 1830. He was also M.P. for Launceston during the years 1831-32. After a long and successful career of almost half a century he died on July 30, 1833 in London.⁴⁹

In addition to his skilled diplomatic career, he was also a prolific writer of history. His literary contributions include *Political History of India* (1811), *History of Persia* (1815), *Life of Clive*, etc.⁵⁰ As a writer, he was associated with the Romantic

45. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 17.

46. It was first published in *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XI (Calcutta, 1810) and was separately published under the title *Sketch of the Sikhs: A Singular Nation who inhabit the Provinces of the Punjab*, by John Murry, London in 1812.

47. John Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major General Sir John Malcolm* (London, 1856), Vol. I, p. 4 as quoted in G. Khurana, *op.cit.*, p. 18; also C.E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 271.

48. John Kaye as quoted in G. Khurana, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

49. C.E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 271.

50. *Ibid.*

School of Thought.⁵¹ His academic merits were fully recognised. He was knighted and made a K.C.B. in April 1815 and was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (D.C.L.) at Oxford in 1816.⁵²

Malcolm came to Punjab in 1805.⁵³ He was accompanying Lord Lake following Jaswant Rao Holkar. Holkar had advanced to the Punjab to gain the help of Sikh Chiefs for his cause. The duty of John Malcolm as a political official was to persuade the Sikh Chiefs not to render any help to Holkar.⁵⁴ Malcolm availed of this opportunity to collect materials on the Sikhs. He visited Calcutta towards the end of 1806, and stayed there for six months. It was there that he wrote his *Sketch of the Sikhs*.⁵⁵ During his visit to Punjab he collected both written as well as oral information about the history, manners and religion of the Sikhs. Malcolm was also in possession of the earlier English writings on the Sikhs which according to him were sufficient only to excite than to gratify curiosity.⁵⁶ Malcolm wanted to write a detailed history of the Sikhs but the active nature of his public duties did not allow him much time and leisure for it. He wrote this hasty sketch with the purpose that, "it will be useful at the moment when every information regarding the Sikhs is of importance," and in the hope that, "it may, perhaps, stimulate and aid some person, who has more leisure and better opportunities, to accomplish that task which I once contemplated."⁵⁷ The above quotations reveal the motive of the author behind the writing of his sketch.

Malcolm's study of the Sikhs is an advancement over the earlier attempts not only from the point of view of rich information but also from the point of view of the author's attitude and the depth of his analysis. During his visit to the Punjab, Malcolm was able to collect a large number of manuscripts including a copy of the *Ādi Granth*.⁵⁸ In addition

51. Fauja Singh (ed.), *History and Historians of the Sikhs*, p. 17.

52. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 271.

53. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs : Their Origin, Customs and Manners* (edited by Subhash C. Aggarwal) (Chandigarh : Vinay Publications, 1981), p. 1 (Introduction).

54. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 18.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Malcolm, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

57. *Ibid.* p. 3.

58. *Ibid.* p. 2.

to some Persian books on the Sikhs, Malcolm has made use of the *Ādi Granth*, the *Dasam Pādhsbāh Kā Granth*, the *Vārs of Bhāi Gurdās*, the *Janamsākhī of Bhāi Bālā*, etc. At Calcutta, the services of a Sikh priest of Nirmala order (Atma Ram) were at his disposal, who explained to him the ceremonies of their religion in a very free and open manner.⁵⁹ John Leyden, a trained Surgeon and a man of great learning and command over the oriental languages,⁶⁰ translated a few passages from Punjabi and Duggar dialects for him dealing with the Sikh history and religion.⁶¹ Thus Malcolm was able to collect more authentic information on the Sikhs than any earlier Western writer. His sympathetic treatment of the material has further added to the merit of his work. On almost all the points of controversy he gave preference to the Sikh sources, inspite of their vague and self contradictory nature.⁶² In relation to the earlier accounts, his understanding of the Sikh history and religion is deeper, more balanced and based on the authentic sources. He has divided the whole account into three sections dealing respectively with the history and origin of the Sikhs, their customs and manners and their religion. Because of these merits of Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, it has appropriately come to be regarded as the foundation of any serious understanding of the history, culture and religion of the Sikhs.⁶³

WARD'S ACCOUNT OF THE SIKHS

Another important writer after Malcolm to write on the Sikhs was Rev. William Ward. His account of the Sikhs is primarily based on Malcolm's sketch. Unlike Polier, Browne and Malcolm it is not an independent study, but forms part of his broader study of 'the Hindoos'.⁶⁴

William Ward was born on October 20, 1769. His father, John Ward, was a carpenter and builder, who apprenticed him

59. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 2.

60. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 251.

61. Malcolm, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

63. Khurana while dealing with this study has called it 'The Foundation', *British Histortography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, pp. 17-34.

64. W. Ward, *The Hindoos* (History, Literature and Religion) (New Delhi : Publication Services) (First Serampore, 1815, 2 vols.), Chapter IV, pp 342-354.

to a printer. He was baptised at Hull in 1796 and studied at the Rev. Dr. Fawcett's training establishment at Ewold Hall. He was sent to India in 1799 with Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), a great baptist missionary, by the Baptist Missionary Committee. They arrived at Serampur, a Danish settlement and were joined by Willian Carey (1761-1834), another baptist missionary and a great scholar of Oriental languages. They established Serampur Mission under the protection of Danish Governor, Colonel Bie. In addition to preaching, Ward looked after the printing press of the Mission as Superintendent. He set the type of Bengali translation of the New Testament (by Carey) and printed the translation of the scriptures in more than twenty languages. Ward had widely travelled in Europe and America to collect money for the mission College at Serampur. He died of cholera on March 7, 1823 at Serampur. In addition to his *History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindus*, he has also written a *Memoir of Krishna-pal, the first Hindu Convert in Bengal*.⁶⁵

As already hinted, Ward's main source of information for his 'Account of the Sikhs' is Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*. However, he has added to this information from other independent sources. The help of a very learned 'Shikh' who was employed in the Serampore printing office was available to him.⁶⁶ In this study, Ward concentrated mainly on the religious aspect of the Sikh community, including a brief account of the Sikh Gurus, their contribution to the growth of the community and their religious beliefs and practices. Ward perhaps is the first Western writer on the Sikhs who has given a gist of the main ideas of the Japuji of Guru Nanak. He has also paraphrased many other hymns of *Gurbānī* including the hymns of Bhagat Ravidas and Bhagat Kabir. He is perhaps the first missionary to have taken a close look at the religion of the Sikhs. After Wilkins, his account is concerned with the understanding of the Sikhs from religious point of view, without any political motivations. In the systematic studies of the Sikh beliefs and practices in English, Ward's name will be included among the pioneers.

65. The above information about the life of Ward is based on Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, pp. 276, 73, 441.

66. W. Ward, *The Hindoos* (History, Literature and Religion), p. 342.

CAPTAIN MURRAY AND PRINSEP

Two important Western writers on the Sikhs, to follow Rev. W. Ward are Captain William Murray (1791-1831) and Henry Thoby Prinsep (1792-1878). Captain Murray spent sixteen years (1815-31) among the Sikhs as Assistant Political Agent at Ludhiana, Deputy Superintendent of Sikh and Hill Affairs and later Political Agent at Ambala. During his stay among the Sikhs he collected a large amount of written material and oral information from knowledgeable persons through his personal contacts. This authentic and first hand information remained unpublished for many years but now it is available in printed form.⁶⁷ H.T. Prinsep's *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with an Account of the Religion, Laws and Customs of the Sikhs*⁶⁸ is primarily based on the material collected by Captain Murray. Prinsep has further enriched this information by adding from Captain Wade's (Agent at Ludhiana) report and from some other sources. He re-wrote the whole of historical part and added one chapter on Bentinck and Ranjit Singh's meeting from his own observations.⁶⁹ The book deals mainly with the political history of the Sikhs from A.D. 1742 to A.D. 1831. An essay on the manners and customs of the Sikhs by Captain William Murray appended to this book deals mainly with the cultural manners and ethnic traits of the people of the Sikh states. Since these two otherwise important writers on the Sikhs have not taken any serious note of the religious beliefs and practices of the Sikhs, not even the history of the Sikh Gurus, we can pass on to the next phase of the Western writings on the Sikhs and Sikhism.

STEINBACH'S PUNJAUB

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's concern to discipline and Westernise his army⁷⁰ provided an opportunity to many European adventurers

67. 'Historical and Political Memoirs of Transactions in the Punjab' in *Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab* (edited by H.S. Bhatia), pp.41-141.

68. First published in 1834 by G.H. Huttman, Military Orphan Press, Calcutta and reprinted in 1970 by Punjab Languages Department, Patiala.

69. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 39.

70. Major Hugh Pearse (ed.), *Soldier and Traveller: Memories of Alexander Gardner* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (first 1898), pp. 299-300.

to seek employment with him. According to one list he had as many as 39 Europeans and others in his service.⁷¹ Some of these officers have left written records of their adventures in Punjab. Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Steinbach was one of such adventurers.

Henry Steinbach was Prussian (German), who entered the Khālsā Darbar service in 1836 as a battalion commander on a starting salary of Rs. 600 increased to Rs. 800 by 1841.⁷² In 1841, the Sikh battalion (erroneously called the Kashmira battalion)⁷³ which he was commanding called him out and ordered him to proceed to Lahore to get the benefits which they wanted from Maharaja Sher Singh. In case of his failure he was threatened with dire consequences. He rushed to Lahore leaving the battalion to the care of Avitabile. On his return to Peshawar he was given the post vacated by the death of Matthew Ford. With this battalion he returned to Lahore in 1843, when it left Peshawar without orders in order to share in the good things going at Lahore.⁷⁴ According to Colonel Alexander Gardner Steinbach narrowly escaped with his life during the mutiny of the Sikh army in 1843.⁷⁵ As soon as he arrived at Lahore he took one year's leave to go to Europe and returned in May 1844, only to find that the Darbar was no longer desirous of retaining him in its service.⁷⁶ Having failed to get reinstated he applied to Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu who gave him the command of couple of battalions and some guns. He was in the service of Raja Gulab Singh until 1851 when he resigned the service on being superseded by an Indian commander. He appealed to Governor-General to intervene and to induce Gulab Singh to restore to him his original appointment. The Governor-General expressed his inability to interfere in the affairs of an independent prince and dismissed his appeal with the comment that it was quite possible that the Indian was the better man of the two.⁷⁷ Steinbach who

71. Major G. Carmichael Symth, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First 1847), pp. xxxvi-xxxvii (appendix).

72. C. Grey, *European Adventurers of Northern India, 1785-1849* (edited by H.L.O. Garret) (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970), p. 325.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

75. Major Hugh Pearse (ed.), *Soldier and Traveller*, p. 371.

76. C. Grey, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

77. *Ibid.*

was at Simla at that time expressed his resentment to the Governor-General in person and returned to Europe.⁷⁸ Nothing was heard of him after this. Steinbach's undistinguished service could have been immediately forgotten if he had not written a small book on Punjab.

Colonel Steinbach's book was first published in 1845 under the title : *The Punjaub : Being Brief Account of the History of the Country of the Sikhs, its Extent, History, Commerce, Productions, Government, manufacturers, Laws, Religion, etc.*⁷⁹ The book is more a compilation than an original contribution. It is primarily based on the account of Malcolm, Murray, Prinsep, Baron Charles Hugel, Moorcroft, and Trebeck, and Edward Thornton's *Gazetteer of Countries Adjacent to India on the North-West* (London, 1844). The eighth chapter excepting first two pages, is from Captain Murray.⁸⁰ Regarding the sources of the ninth chapter, Khurana informs us that Colonel Steinbach procured a specimen of the proceedings of Lahore Darbar from a news-writer and added to it the account of the interview of Auckland and the Maharaja on 29th November, 1838 at Ferozepur from Stocqueler's *Memorials of Afghanistan*.⁸¹ The tenth chapter is mostly based on Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*. Because of the growing British interest in Punjab, the first edition was issued in 1846.

The aim of the author is not to produce any authentic account of the history of the Punjab but to put together in a hasty and careless manner of the material available on 'the country of the Sikhs' in order to make a forceful plea for the annexation of the Punjab by the Britishers. The selection of the material and his own commentary on the affairs of the Punjab, speaks of his own embittered and prejudiced mind against his motives behind this book but he clearly expresses them in the preface.⁸² The author touches upon all the important aspects of the life and the

78. C. Grey, *European Adventurers of Northern India, 1785-1849*, p. 326.

79. (London: Thakcer & Co., 1845) (reprinted Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1970); also by Bhagi Publishers, Ambala Catt. 1972 under the title *Sikh Empire: Culture and Thought*.

80. *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab* from pages 156 to 166, excepting few paragraphs.

81. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 68.

82. Henry Steinbach, *Sikh Empire: Culture and Thought* (Ambala: Bhagi Publishers, 1972), p. vii (Preface).

country of Punjab. The whole book is written with a view to lending support to the idea of annexation of the Punjab by the Britishers. The chapter devoted to the religion of the Sikhs may also be interpreted in terms of the above motive. In this chapter, he has given a brief history of Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus. He has also given a brief account of the teachings of Guru Nanak and the Sikh beliefs. Instead of adding anything to the understanding of the religion of the Sikhs, he has by his careless manner misrepresented what was properly understood by Malcolm. McLeod is quite justified when he says that, "as one continues through Steinbach's narrative the errors accumulate, invariably in defiance of Malcolm's guidance."⁸³ His ignorance and gross misrepresentation of the Sikh religion can be known from the fact that regarding the Harimander Sahib at Amritsar he says that it is a temple to Vishnu, one of the Sikh deities.⁸⁴ We shall return to his analysis and understanding of the Sikh tenets in the relevant chapters. Only one thing can be said at this point that after nine years' stay among the Sikhs his ignorance of the Sikh religion is far more deeper than many of those who have never put their foot in the Punjab. We have included him in this survey only because of the reason that he has devoted one chapter to the religion of the Sikhs. Most of his contemporary Western writers on the Sikhs have preferred to focus on the Sikh rule and the Anglo-Sikh relations.

M'GREGOR'S HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Another contemporary Western writer to have written on the history of the Sikh Gurus and their teachings is W.L. M'Gregor. Unlike Steinbach, M'Gregor was in the service of British Government. He was a medical doctor, attached to the First European Infantry as Assistant Surgeon in 1835, when he first visited Punjab.⁸⁵ In September-October of 1835, he witnessed the Dussehra Festival in Amritsar in the company of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁸⁶ His second visit towards the end of 1836 was

83. W.H. McLeod, 'Colonel Steinbach and the Sikhs,' *The Punjab Past and Present* (Patiala : Punjabi University), Vol. IX, part II, Serial No. 18, October 1975, p. 295.

84. Henry Steinbach, *Sikh Empire : Culture and Thought*, p. 15.

85. S.S. Bal, 'W.L. M'Gregor', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 58.

86. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs* (Allahabad : R.S. Publishing House, 1979) (First 1846), Vol. I, pp. 240-41.

under peculiar circumstances, to cure the Maharaja from a complaint by the operation of electricity and galvanism. The Maharaja's power of speech had been affected by the paralytic stroke from which he had earlier suffered. M'Gregor was in Lahore on deputation as medical attendant by the order of Mr. Metcalfe, the Governor of the North-Western Province and an old friend of the Maharaja. He had accepted this deputation more with a view to seeing the Maharaja and conversing with him than any other pecuniary consideration. M'Gregor performed the job with considerable success⁸⁷ by virtue of which he wielded considerable influence over the Maharaja, which he always used to the advantage of the Company.⁸⁸ During this time he started recording his impressions of the Sikh Court, and by 1838 he drew up a paper on the Court of Ranjit Singh presented it to the Governor-General (Lord Auckland).⁸⁹ Later on this paper was incorporated in the *History of the Sikhs*, volume one, pp. 202-266. After the death of the Maharaja, M'Gregor went back to his regiment at Sabathu and continued taking interest in the Punjab politics from the Britisher's point of view.

When the First Sikh War broke out, M'Gregor accompanied his regiment and was at Mudki on December 20, 1845. He served as a Medical Officer for the rest of the war that ended in February the following year. He was an eye-witness to the most closely contested battles of Mudki and Sobraon.⁹⁰ On the close of the war, M'Gregor was posted at Lahore to serve under Sir Henry Lawrence, the Agent of the Governor-General on the North-West Frontier. For a short time he also officiated as Political Agent during the temporary absence of that functionary.⁹¹ Although a surgeon by profession, M'Gregor was a man of varied interests and a keen observer of historical and political events. He started collecting material on the Sikh history during his deputation with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and published a complete history of the Sikhs in two volumes by the end of 1846.

M'Gregor is the first Western writer to have written a complete detailed history of the Sikhs from the birth of Guru

87. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs* (Allahabad : R.S. Publishing House, 1979) (First 1846), Vol. I, pp. 274-75.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-80.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

90. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 386.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 281 (and foot note).

Nanak to the capture of Kot Kangra by the Britishers. It was published at a time when there was a great demand of information on the Punjab. The first edition was sold within a few months and the second edition appeared in 1847 without any revision. It is for the historians to judge the merit of the book, but the following comment of John Kaye, the reviewer, seems in order where he regards the attempt as 'a non-descript performance, a graft of history upon a stock of personal narrative, the one ever destroying the vitality of the other'. The reviewer asserts that the three-fourth information given by the author was already available and went to the extent of suggesting that the remaining one-fourth information should have been given in a small volume under such unassuming title as "Journal of a Medical Officer, serving in the recent campaigns on the Sutlej, with a personal narrative of a visit to the Court of Ranjit Singh."⁹²

According to S.S. Bal, the main focus of the author is on the reign of Ranjit Singh and the following eight years of the disintegration of the Sikh power; war with the Britishers and its after effects, and the inclusion of the first phases of the Sikh history is by way of introduction to this period.⁹³ In this detailed history he has devoted six chapters from pages 31 to 104 to the history of the Sikh Gurus, origin, development and transformation of the Sikh religion. His understanding of the Sikh religion and tradition is in no way better than Colonel Steinbach. Whatever correct information is there is already found in George Forster and John Malcolm, on whose accounts he has heavily drawn, but where he attempts to supplement from the Muslim sources and from his own understanding, he makes gross misinterpretations. After spending so many years among the Sikhs he remained ignorant of such basic things as the initiation ceremony of the Sikhs, the creation of the Khālsā, etc.⁹⁴ As far this phase of history is concerned, he does not add anything to the information on Sikhism already available except some gross misrepresentations of such central events and turning points of the Sikh history as the martyrdom of Guru

92. *Calcutta Review*, Vol. II, No. XIV, p. 283 as quoted by Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 102.

93. S.S. Bal, 'W.L. M'Gregor', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 61.

94. M'Gregor, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, Chapter III, pp. 69-78.

Arjan Dev, Guru Teg Bahadur and the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh.⁹⁵

HISTORY OF THE SIKHS BY CUNNINGHAM

What John Malcolm had once conceived but could not execute because of lack of leisure in his otherwise active life had been fully accomplished by Joseph Davey Cunningham. His detailed history of the Sikhs⁹⁶ which first appeared in 1849, has been deservedly regarded as the culmination of almost a century's Western writings on the Sikhs. Cunningham had the desired aptitude, competence and means to take up this job. His 'unbiased mind', 'fastidious fondness for accuracy' and 'consummate erudition' all combined to produce his *magnum opus*.⁹⁷

Joseph Davey Cunningham was born on June 9, 1812 in Lambeth in a Scottish family with a literary tradition.⁹⁸ His father Allan Cunningham was a writer of considerable merit and an author of a few creative and historical books which include *Sri Marmaduke Maxwell*, a drama, and the *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects* published in 1829-33.⁹⁹ Joseph was oldest and the most brilliant among the family of six—five brothers and a sister.¹⁰⁰ Joseph was educated in different private schools of London. He was procured a cadetship through the good office of Sir Walter Scott.¹⁰¹ He had a very distinguished career at Addiscombe, a military seminary to train military officers for the East India Company. He obtained the first prize in mathematics, the sword of good conduct and the first nomination for the Bengal engineers.¹⁰²

95. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 3.

96. Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej* (London: John Murray, 1849, 1851, 1853); *Paisa Akbbār* Lahore, 1897; Oxford University Press, 1918; S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1972, reprint 1981.

97. 'An Appreciation', *Ibid.*, p. III.

98. *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1886), Vol. V, p. 314.

99. 'Biographical Notes on the Cunningham Family', *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XII.

100. S.S. Bal, 'Joseph Davey Cunningham', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 85.

101. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 103.

102. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.

He was then sent to Chatham for professional training in Engineering and after a year he came out from there with even greater distinction, receiving the highest prize from his instructors.¹⁰³ He reached India in 1832.¹⁰⁴ On arrival in India he was first employed on the staff of the Chief Engineer of the Bengal Presidency. In 1837, he was appointed assistant to Colonel Claude Wade, the Political Agent at Ludhiana on the Sikh frontiers. For the next eight years he held various appointments under the successor of Colonel Wade and at the outbreak of the First Sikh War he was Political Agent in the State of Bahawalpur.¹⁰⁵ The author in his preface to the first edition has given accounts of the various appointments held by him during eight years of his stay among the Sikhs as Political Officer of the Company.¹⁰⁶ His first job in the Punjab was to render Ferozepur a defensible post. He was present at the interview between Ranjit Singh and Lord Auckland which took place in 1838. In 1839, he accompanied Shahzada Taimur and Colonel Wade to Peshawar and was present at the time of forcing of the Pass of Khaibar and laying open the road to Kabul. In 1840, he was placed in administrative charge of the district of Ludhiana. In the same year he was deputed by Mr. Clark, the new Political Agent, to accompany Colonel Shelton and his relieving brigade to Peshawar, whence he returned with troops escorting Dost Muhammad Khan under Colonel Wheeler. During part of 1841 he was in magisterial charge of the Ferozepur district and on the close of that year he was appointed to proceed to Tibet to see that the ambitious Rajas of Jammu surrendered certain territories which they had seized from the Chinese of Lassa and that British trade with Ladakh and Circa, was restored to its old footing. He returned from Tibet by the end of the year and was present at the interviews between Lord Ellenborough and Dost Muhammad at Ludhiana

103. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.

104. S.S. Bal, 'Joseph Davey Cunningham', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, pp. 86-87. Bal has given this date on the basis of the Memorial to the Court of Directors dated 30th August 1849, para 2 by Cunningham (*Indian Secret Consultations* No. 12). But the Biographical Note on the Cunningham Family' in the *History of the Sikhs*, p. XII, gives 1834.

105. 'Biographical Note on the Cunningham Family', *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XIII.

106. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (Author's preface to 1st Edition, p. XXIII-XXV).

and between Lord Ellenborough and the Sikh Chiefs at Ferozepur in December 1842. During part of 1843, he was in civil charge of Ambala and from the middle of that year, till the end of 1844, he was personal assistant to Colonel Richmond. After Major Broadfoot as agent and during 1845 he was British Agent to the native state of Bahawalpur. When the first Sikh war broke out, Sir Charles Napier ordered him at once to join his army in Sindh, because of his great knowledge of the Sikh affairs.¹⁰⁷ After the battle of Ferozeshahr he was summoned to Lord Gough's head-quarters and was subsequently directed to accompany Sir Harry Smith, when a diversion was made towards Ludhiana and he was thus present at the skirmish of Badowal and at the battle of Aliwal. He also participated in the battle of Sabraon and was acting on that day as an aide-de-camp to the Governor-General. He was then attached to the head-quarters of Commander-in-Chief until the army broke up at Lahore, when he accompanied Lord Hardinge's camp to Simla Hills. He received thanks for his role in the General Orders of Sir Harry Smith and also of Lord Henry Hardinge.¹⁰⁸ After the war, Governor General asked Cunningham to decide the case of Suchet Singh's treasure which he decided in a way which was not to the liking of the Governor-General. The Governor-General suddenly discovered in Cunningham "a decided partisan of the Sikhs", gave him a promotion as Political Agent and packed him off to Bhopal.¹⁰⁹

Although unhappy at the shift to Bhopal, Cunningham made the best use of his time of stay at Bhopal. This period was most fruitful in the life of Cunningham from the literary and professional point of view. It was here that he published his *History of the Sikhs*. Besides his *magnum opus* he also published some papers on antiquities and archeology, a field in which his younger brother Alexander Cunningham later made his name.¹¹⁰ In his *History of the Sikhs*, Cunningham did not make any hesitation in relating the whole truth on the First

107. S.S. Bal, 'Joseph Davey Cunningham, *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 90.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

110. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVI, Part II, July-December 1847, Vol. XVII, Part I, January-June, 1848.

Sikh War which gave offence to some of his superiors. As a punishment he was removed from his political appointment,¹¹¹ on July 11, 1849 for having made unauthorized use of official documents entrusted to his charge as a public officer.¹¹² The smouldering sense of disgrace and humiliation hastened his end and soon after his appointment to the Meerut Division of Public Works, he died suddenly at Ambala on February 28, 1851.¹¹³ His mortal remains were buried at Ambala.¹¹⁴ Joseph remained unmarried and he never took any furlough or leave during seventeen years of his service till 1848.¹¹⁵

The foregoing account makes it amply clear that J.D. Cunningham had a very brilliant and assiduous career. His achievements at the schools, at Addiscombe, at Chatham speak of his brilliance and academic accomplishments. His very successful professional career speaks of his industrious, diligent and skillful life. Whatever job was entrusted to him, he did it earnestly, skillfully, thoroughly and with a sense of perfection. He was very fond of reading books, but his studies were not confined to books relating to his professional skill; they also included books relating to the subjects of geology, geography, ethnology, history, science, literature, philosophy, religion, etc. He extensively quotes from these sources in his writings. He was not only a historian but a philosopher of history. He was interested in everything that was related to the understanding of man and civilization. His main object in writing on the history of the Sikhs was to "give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity".¹¹⁶ Whatever may be his success in his second object; of studying the Anglo-Sikh and Anglo-Afghan relations, his main contribution however, lies in elaborating the thesis of

111. 'Biographical Note on the Cunningham Family', *History of the Sikhs*, p. XIII.

112. Foreign Department Notification No. 246, Government of India Foreign Department Secret, September 29, 1849, No. 8, quoted in G. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 123.

113. 'Note on the Cunningham Family', *History of the Sikhs*, p. XIII.

114. From Lt. Colonel J.F. Boilcan to H.M. Elliot, No. 3736, Dated Ambala, February 1851, Govt. of India, For. Const. No. 216, March 21, 1851 as quoted by G. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab*, p. 125.

115. S.S. Bal, 'Joseph Davey Cunningham', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 93.

116. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, author's preface to the second edition, p. xx.

origin and growth of the Sikh faith and Nation. He studied the growth of the Sikh Nation in terms of the spirit of reforms introduced by the teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The above relationship was neither so fully appreciated nor so well worked out by any of his predecessors. His main contribution lies in appreciating the depth of this relation in the case of growth of Sikh Nation and elaborating it so fully well. The animating spirit infused by the innovations of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and the mystical Khālsā are his two basic presuppositions for interpreting the origin and development of the Sikh Nation. The transformation of history and nation has been interpreted in terms of creative human force.

Cunningham was not only an absorbent reader but also an admirable writer, as borne out by his writings. During eight years stay among the Sikhs, he availed of every opportunity to know the people. In addition to that, he had free access to all the public records, bearing on the affairs of the frontier.¹¹⁷ It seems that from his earlier days in Punjab, Cunningham was regularly keeping a journal.¹¹⁸ However, it was only in 1844 that the idea to write the history of the Sikhs occurred to him, when he was engaged in drawing up reports on the British connection generally with the states on the Sutlej and especially on the military resources of the Punjab.¹¹⁹ From then onwards, he started preparing for the task by collecting every available information published or unpublished. Academically the most creative period of his life was between 1844 and 1848. It was during this period that he published a few scholarly papers in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.¹²⁰ His appointment at Bhopal provided him leisure time to compile his material on the history of the Sikhs and it appeared first in 1849. His *History of the Sikhs*, gave rise to a controversy and led to heated discussion in the British Press. The author was mainly criticised for his sympathies and appreciation of the Sikh faith and also

117. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (Preface to 1st edition), p. XXIV.

118. Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and Afghans* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First 1883), p. XII (Preface).

119. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XXIV (Preface to 1st edition).

120. For the details of these four papers, see S.S. Bal 'Joseph Davey Cunningham', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 97.

for his criticism of some of the functionaries of the Company for their policy towards the Sikh Kingdom.¹²¹

The *History of the Sikhs* is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is of general nature and deals with the country and the people. In the second chapter, the teachings of Guru Nanak have been described in the background of the Indian religious traditions. The third chapter traces the growth of the Sikh faith under the later Gurus, creation of the Khālsā by Guru Gobind Singh and the struggles and execution of Banda Singh. The fourth chapter deals with the history of the Sikhs upto 1764 when the Sikhs having successfully come out of the repressive Mughal regime, established themselves as an independent people. The fifth chapter traces the Misl period upto the ascendancy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1808-09. The next two chapters are devoted to the rule of Ranjit Singh upto his death in 1839. The eighth chapter deals with the succeeding six years upto the death of Wazir Jawahar Singh in 1845. The last chapter entitled 'The War With the English' deals with causes and outcome of the First Sikh War. Although it is only in the two chapters (II and III) that the author directly deals with the history and teachings of the Sikh Gurus, yet the notion of prevailing spirit of Sikhism and the notion of Sikh Nation provides thematic unity to the whole book. In no other account of the history of the Sikhs they have been described with so much emphasis and cogency in relation to their faith. The role and inspiration of religion in the development of Sikh community as a political power was noticed by Browne, Polier, Forster, Malcolm, etc. but it was reserved for Cunningham to fully work out this relationship. How Cunningham has succeeded in securing Sikhism its rightful place in the general history of mankind is not certain but undoubtedly it is the culmination of the Western writings on the Sikhs upto this period. With his history of the Sikhs the Western studies of Sikhism have come of age. It was also significant from the point of view that the Punjab was soon to be annexed by the Britishers and altogether a new destiny was waiting for the course of development of the community and its proper understanding.

121. A summary of the views of the reviewers is given in J.S. Grewal's, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1972), pp. 123-125.

WILSON ON SIKHISM

Before entering into the survey of next important phase of the Western writings on the Sikhs, when the Britishers were the masters of the Punjab and the encounter of the Sikhs with the west was direct, it seems relevant to take a brief notice of the writings of Horace Hayman Wilson on Sikhism. His writings on the Sikhs are not significant from the point of view of volume as compared to his voluminous writings on Hinduism, but they are significant from the point of view that they are from the pen of such a renowned scholar and an authority on Indian religions.

H.H.Wilson¹²² was born on September 26, 1786 and was educated in Soho Square, London and St. Thomas Hospital. He arrived in Calcutta in 1808, in the medical service of the East India Company, and was attached to the mint at Calcutta for his knowledge of Chemistry and assay. He was Secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, from 1811 to 1833 with short intervals. He studied Sanskrit steadily and translated the *Meghadūta* of Kalidasa in 1813. In 1816, he was appointed Assaymaster of the Calcutta mint and held the appointment until he left India in 1832. He published the *Theatre of the Hindus* and *Sanskrit English Dictionary* (two editions), besides contributing to Asiatic, Medical, Physical Societies and other Oriental Literature. He was the Secretary to the Committee of Public Instructions, introducing the study of European Science and English Literature into native education and was visitor to Sanskrit College. He became Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford in 1833 and Hon. M.A. at Exeter College. He was Librarian of the India House in 1836, and was Director of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1837 till his death. He was the member of the Asiatic Societies of Paris and Calcutta, of the Imperial Society of Naturalists of Moscow, of the Royal Academies of Berlin and Munich, etc. His publications include the *Vishnu Purāṇa*, *Lectures on the Religious and Philosophical Systems of the Hindus*, 1840, a *Sanskrit Grammar*, the *Asiana Antiqua*, translation of Macnaghten's *Hindu Law*. He was undoubtedly the greatest scholar of Sanskrit of his time. Combining a variety

122. The Life Sketch of Wilson is based on the *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 455.

of attainments as general linguist, historian, chemist, accountant, numismatist, actor and musician he died on May 8, 1860.

Wilson's account of the Sikh sects is contained in his *Religious Sects of the Hindus*,¹²³ the first portion of which appeared in *Asiatic Researches* for 1828, and the second in the volume for 1832.¹²⁴ Another article by him, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs' first appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. IX (1848) and was subsequently included in *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*.¹²⁵ The first account includes the Sikhs among many minor Hindu sects and describes the origin, history and main teachings of Sikhism in the terms of the beliefs and practices of the various Sikh sects such as Nanak Shāhis, Udāsis, Gobind Singhis, Nirmalās, etc. The information is primarily drawn from the accounts of Wilkins, John Malcolm and from his personal participation in a prayer session at Banaras and from the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XIX, 521-33, and XX, 314-20, 487-502, translation of the "Vichitra Natak" by Captain G. Siddons.¹²⁶ Atma Ram, a Sikh priest at Calcutta, who had helped Malcolm, was also well known to Wilson.¹²⁷

The article on the civil and religious institutions of the Sikhs is more detailed and comprehensive than the account of the Sikh sects. It was drawn in compliance with the expressed wish of some of the members of the Asiatic Society, to be possessed on a brief notice of the institutions of the Sikhs which distinguish them from the Hindus in general.¹²⁸ The author has attempted to highlight the uniqueness of the Sikh civil and religious institutions, but he is reluctant to give Sikhism an appellation of a faith.¹²⁹ The civil and religious institutions have been viewed in relation to each other, but the conclusions arrived at by the author widely differ from those of Cunningham.

123. H.H. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus*, edited by Ernst Rost (Calcutta : Susil Gupta, India, Pvt. Ltd., 1985) (First 1861), pp. 149-54.

124. *Ibid.*, p. vii (Preface by Reinhold Rost).

125. *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium* (Calcutta : Susil Gupta India Pvt. Ltd., 1958), pp. 54-70.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

127. *Ibid.* (Foot-note No. 184).

128. Wilson 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, p. 69 (Footnote).

129. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-68.

Undoubtedly it is a serious attempt to provide a systematic account of the beliefs and practices of the Sikhs and their civil and religious institutions but the analysis suffers greatly because of the author's ignorance of the true facts and lack of familiarity with the community and their beliefs. However, some points raised in the course of analysis are important for the proper understanding of the Sikh institutions.

CUST'S TRACT ON GURU NANAK

Robert Needham Cust was a distinguished civil servant of East India Company, a renowned Orientalist and author of many papers and books. Among his few writings on the Punjab history he has left an admirable and well written brief account of the life and mission of Baba Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Robert Cust was the son of Hon. and Rev. H.C. Cust, brother of Earl Brownlow. He was born on February 24, 1821 and was educated at Eton and Haileybury. He entered in the Bengal Civil Service in 1843 and retired in 1867.¹³⁰ He served in North West Province (present Uttar Pradesh) and Punjab in many capacities. He was present at the battles of Mudki, Ferozshahr and Sabraon. He was a member of the committee to help Henry Lawrence to keep an eye on the Punjab affairs after the First Sikh War.¹³¹ In 1855, he was called to the bar from Lincoln's Inn. He took part in the settlement of the Punjab after the mutiny of 1858. He was Home Secretary to the Government of India in 1864-65 and was the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society for some time.¹³² He was the author of many books on the religions and languages of the world. His writings include *The Countries betwixt the Sutlej and Jamuna (Selections from the Calcutta Review, Vol. II)*, *Linguistic and Oriental Essays* written from 1840 to 1903, *Memoirs of Past Years of a Septuagenarian* (Life Memoirs R.N. Cust 1821-1899), etc.¹³³ Among his many writings is also included an 'educational tract', 'The life of Baba Nanak, the founder of the Sikh Sect'. It was first published in

130. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 105.

131. M'Gregor, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 257.

132. Buckland, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

133. Ganda Singh, *A Bibliography of the Punjab*, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1966), p. 23.

1859-60, and was reprinted in 1863 in the March-April issue of the *Oriental Christian Spectator*. In a slightly abridged form, it was further reprinted as an article in the *Indian Antiquary*, in October 1874. S.S. Bal has included this last version in his compilation *Guru Nanak in the Eyes of Non-Sikhs*.¹³⁴ In this small article, the writer has presented a very admirable account of the life of Baba Nanak and the nature of his mission. In a very lucid style he pays glowing tributes to the reforms brought about by Guru Nanak. The account is based on the Sikh chronicles and author's own information collected during his stay among the land and people of Baba Nanak. The author does not enter into any controversial issue and it is of descriptive nature presented in a readable style. It shows the close familiarity of the author with the religion and the community and his openness and sympathetic attitude.

When after the annexation of the Punjab, the Punjab Government had initiated a project to preserve the translation of the authentic versions of both the *Ādi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*, Robert Cust had offered to translate both these *Granth*s if provided sufficient time and funds but this offer somehow could not materialize, and the work of translation was later entrusted to Ernest Trumpp.¹³⁵

ERNEST TRUMPP AND THE ĀDI GRANTH

The project of the Punjab Government to translate and preserve the authentic versions of the *Ādi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* planned in 1859,¹³⁶ could begin only in 1869.¹³⁷ The Secretary of State appointed Ernest Trumpp, a renowned German student of Indian languages, to carry out the translation work.

Ernest Trumpp was born on March 13, 1828 in Ilsfeld near Besigheim in Northern Wuerttemberg. He was the son of

134. S.S. Bal (Compiler and Editor), *Guru Nanak in the Eyes of Non-Sikhs* (Chandigarh: Publication Bureau, Punjab University, 1969), pp. 93-107.

135. N.G. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, pp. 167-68.

136. Correspondence in Foreign Politics 1859, April 8, 141-42, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 167.

137. PG to GI, 164, May 25, 1869, and subsequent correspondence, Foreign General, July 1869, 68-9 KW, quoted in *Ibid.*

George Trumpp, a peasant and master carpenter and his wife Sera.¹³⁸ Ernest Trumpp grew up in the pietist atmosphere of Wuerttemberg part of southwestern Germany, where Lutheran reformation had taken firm roots in the 16th century. Johannes Geyling, the person responsible for the spread of Luther's ideals in this area belonged to Trumpp's own village Ilsfeld.¹³⁹ Trumpp passed his maturity examination at the early age of seventeen and his parents decided that the boy should become a Lutheran minister.¹⁴⁰ He joined the famous Stift, a theological college in Tuebingen and besides his theological studies he concentrated on languages which included, in addition to Hebrew, a part of the theological curriculum, Sanskrit and Arabic.¹⁴¹ After a brief period of imprisonment for taking part in the Liberal Movement of 1848, he completed his studies at the University of Tuebingen.¹⁴² From Tuebingen he went to Basel in Switzerland for a short stay and then proceeded to London. After a brief period, when he taught Greek and Latin in a private school, he was employed by the East India House through the good offices of Sir Edwin Norris and was made assistant Librarian.¹⁴³ It was here that his accuracy and great talent for grammatical problems attracted the attention of the Church Mission Society and he was asked to go to India for an intense study of modern Indian languages and to compose their grammars and dictionaries for use by future missionaries. Trumpp agreed to the proposal and reached Karachi in 1854.¹⁴⁴ He learnt Sindhi and finished his *Sindhi Reading Book* after about one year of his arrival. He also found time to learn Persian from a *munshi* and translated the common Book of Prayer into Persian.¹⁴⁵ The young missionary-scholar was soon honoured by the British, the Governor of Bombay Mountstuart Elphinstone, conferred upon him the freedom of the city of Bombay; Bishop Harding

138. Annemarie Schimmel, *German Contributions to the Study of Indo-Pakistan Linguistics* (Hamburg, 1981), p. 84.

139. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

140. Annemarie Schimmel, *German Contributions to the Study of Indo-Pakistan Linguistics* (Hamburg, 1981), p. 85.

141. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

144. *Ibid.*

145. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

consecrated him a priest of the Anglican Church.¹⁴⁶ The climate of Karachi made Trumpp seriously ill and he had to go to Palestine for treatment. During his stay at Jerusalem he met Pauline Linder from Basel and they were married on October 2, 1856. Immediately after the marriage they returned to Karachi and a son was born to them on September 21, 1857. Pauline died three days after the birth of the child and Trumpp returned to Europe taking little Paul with him.¹⁴⁷ After a brief stay in Switzerland, Trumpp went to Wuerttemberg. In 1858, he married a lady from Stuttgart, Wilhelmine Lusie Pelaragus, the daughter of a well-known artist in Brass founding. Shortly after his second marriage he again left for India. This time their new destination was Peshawar. Immediately after his arrival in Peshawar he started working on Pashto and mastered the complicated language so well that he was able to preach in Pashto after three weeks' stay.¹⁴⁸ During this period he collected material for the languages of Hindukush, Kashmiri, Brahui, etc.

The indefatigable scholar after one and half years hard work again became seriously ill and left Peshawar.¹⁴⁹ The family stayed in Stuttgart where Trumpp concentrated on publishing the results of his studies in numerous articles in German and British Orientalist journals. In 1864, he was appointed deacon in a small town of Pfullingen in Wuerttemberg. While working as a preacher for six years he continued to publish his studies. Trumpp was deeply devoted to his work and his family by now had grown to four children.

In 1870-71 once more Trumpp came to Lahore, now in connection with the translation of the scriptures of the Sikhs. This job was given to him by the British Government in India. After his return from India he was appointed as Reader in Semitic Languages at Tuebingen. During the same year, Munich University appointed him Professor of Semitic languages.¹⁵⁰ Hard work all through his life and the intermittent attacks of fever made him very weak. He lost his eye sight in 1883, spent

146. Annemarie Schimmel, *German Contributions to the Study of Indo-Pakistan Linguistics* (Hamburg, 1981), p. 89.

147. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

148. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

149. *Ibid.*

150. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

the last few years of his life in a mental hospital and passed away on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1885.¹⁵¹

The grammar and phonology of the languages were his main interest and he made a very solid contribution to the studies of Sindhi, Pashto, Medieval Punjabi, Brahui and many other languages. However, in the present context we are mainly concerned with his translation of the *Ādi Granth*.

Trumpp himself has informed us in the preface, that the work of translation of the Sikh Granth was entrusted to him towards the close of the year 1869. It was to be carried on at his place according to the original plan. However, in the absence of any authentic grammar and dictionary he soon found that the translation would be impossible without the native assistance. The India Office allowed him to proceed to the Punjab to seek assistance of the native interpreters of the Granth. He left for India towards the close of the year 1870 and arrived in Lahore.¹⁵² Trumpp writes that on his arrival in the Punjab it did not take him much time to find that the Sikh *Granthis* were ignorant of the meanings of their Granth and the Hindu Brahmans were not interested in the Granth owing to the animosity which formerly existed between the Sikhs and the Hindu community, that the language of the Granth had become already obsolete to a great extent, and that there did not exist any dependable dictionary, or commentary of the Granth.¹⁵³ The author further informs us that in progress of time he succeeded in discovering three very inadequate, unsatisfactory and mutilated commentaries. He read through the Granth with the help of the *Granthis*, noted down the grammatical forms and obsolete words and drew up a grammar and a dictionary. Having prepared his tools he went back to Europe in the year 1872 and began to write down the translation for the press.¹⁵⁴

However, we have another almost contemporary and more dependable version of Ernest Trumpp's arrogant and abominable behaviour and the quality and amount of assistance

151. *Ibid.*, p. 3; Buckland, has given April 10, 1885 as the date of his birth, p. 430.

152. Ernest Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth or The Holy Scripture of the Sikhs* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970) (First 1877), p.v (Preface).

153. *Ibid.*, p. vi (Preface).

154. *Ibid.*, pp. v-vii (Preface).

he could secure during his stay in the Punjab. The version as cited by M.A. Macauliffe in one of his articles is as follows :

"On Dr. Trumpp's arrival in the Punjab he received an official introduction to the Sikh priests at Amritsar and they waited on him on his arrival there to begin his work. He told them that he was a Sanskrit scholar, that he understood their sacred writings better than they did themselves, and by way of emphasizing his remarks, pulled out his cigarcase and perfumed with it the *Ādi Granth* which was lying on the table before him. Tobacco being an abomination to the Sikhs, the priests fled in consternation, and left Dr. Trumpp to plume himself on his display of learning and originality. The result was that he could obtain no assistance in his labours from any orthodox Sikh. He was obliged to depend on a half educated member of the Sikh persuasion, described by orthodox Sikhs as a *lucha*, or a man of loose character, and he worked with him for about a year. He then took the holy book to Munich, where he drew his salary from the India Office, and produced with unassisted and unwearied industry the work which he published in 1877 under the title of the '*Ādi Granth*', or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs."¹⁵⁵

N.G. Barrier also seems to agree with the views expressed by Macauliffe when he writes, "Rather than cooperating with Sikhs, therefore, Trumpp prepared translations with the aid of Hindu *munsbis* and occasional advice from members of a local Oriental Society, the Anjuman-i-Punjab. Besides commenting on Trumpp's work, the Anjuman helped locate and verify the authenticity of various manuscripts."¹⁵⁶ Regarding the original commitment and the final outcome of Trumpp's work, Barrier further informs us, "In summarizing the fruit of his work, he stated that the *Dasam Granth* had turned out to be a collection of myths, *puranic* tales, and ill-considered theory and thus did not justify extensive research. Even the *Ādi Granth*, according to Trumpp, did not need total translation. The Punjab

155. H.R., *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, October 1909, quoted in M.A. Macauliffe, 'The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs' reprinted from the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, October, 1910, pp. 1-2.

156. Jeffery Perrill, 'Trumpp and Orientalism', *Punjab Orientalism* (Unpublished diss. History, University of Missouri, 1976), pp. 503-508 as cited in N.G. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion, *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, pp. 169-70.

Government attempted to make concessions to the scholar in order to complete the Granth and also to secure translations of related material, but to no avail".¹⁵⁷

Trumpp's book may be divided into two parts. The first part contains five chapters from pp. vii to cxxxviii. In the first chapter, after the brief account of the life of Baba Nanak, the author has included the translation of two of the *Janamsākhīs* of Baba Nanak under heading 'A' and 'B'. 'A' *Janamsākhī* of Baba Nanak is a translation of the *Janamsākhī* discovered by H.T. Colebrooke and preserved in the India Office Library. The other translation marked 'B' is the translation of the *Janamsākhī* prevalent in the Punjab at that time and published at Lahore in 1871 and also preserved in the India Office Library, marked 495/2885 Bibliotheca Leydeniana.¹⁵⁸ The second chapter contains the life sketches of the succeeding Gurus upto Guru Gobind Singh. In the third chapter the author has attempted to give a sketch of the religion of the Sikhs. The fourth chapter gives a brief account of the composition of the Granth. The fifth chapter is devoted to the language and the meters used in the Granth. The second part contains the translations of the compositions of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. In this part the author has included the translations of the Banis of daily prayer found in the first thirteen pages of the Granth, the translation of the compositions of the first four Rāgas i.e. Siri, Mājhu, Gauri and Āsā, the translations of the Sloks of Kabir and Sheikh Farid, Savaiyyas of the Bhattas, Sloks of Guru Tegh Bahadur and one Dohra of Guru Gobind Singh. The translations cover 708 pages. In the appendix from pages 709-715 the author has given the original text of the Japuji.

As we have seen in the course of our discussion grammar and phonology were the chief interests of Trumpp, it is only this aspect of the *Ādi Granth* which the learned scholar has been able to appreciate : "But the chief importance of the Sikh Granth lies in the linguistic line as being the treasury of the old Hindui dialects, and I hope that the day will not be far distant when these hitherto hidden treasures will be made available for the furtherance of modern Indian philology by

157. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

158. Ernest Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth*, p. vii (Foot note).

being embodied in a grammar of the medieval Hindu dialects".¹⁵⁹ So far as the other aspects of the Granth and Sikhism are concerned, Trumpp's is a totally miscarried adventure. In order to detail the gross misrepresentations and distortions of the Sikh faith by the learned scholar a full length study is required.

To Trumpp "the Sikh Granth is incoherent and shallow in the extreme, and couched at the same time in dark and perplexing language, in order to cover these defects."¹⁶⁰ Sikhism in his opinion is "a waning religion that will soon belong to history...."¹⁶¹ Regarding the misinterpretations of the Sikh faith and tradition by Trumpp less said the better. The whole amount of protests and petitions against the translation by the Sikhs and his well founded criticism by Western scholars throw ample light on this aspect. We shall come to this aspect in the relevant portions of our study. For the present the following two quotations seem relevant. In a petition to Lord Curzon the Sikhs have maintained that, "Dr. Trumpp had cruelly misrepresented our Granth Sahib, our holy Gurus, and our religion which we so prize. He has spoken in a very offensive terms of the language of our sacred volume...."¹⁶² Macauliffe referring to the unacademic attitude of Trumpp says, "Thus as Dr. Trumpp would not accept the interpretation of the Granth by the Gyanis or professional expounders, so he would not accept the conclusions of disinterested European scholars."¹⁶³

Trumpp, undoubtedly, was a great authority on the modern languages of the North India. His translations of the portions of the *Ādi Granth* and the *Janamsākhīs* were the pioneering works in the area of the Sikh studies. For the first time the efforts were made in order to have an authentic version of the Sikh scriptures and the traditional Sikh literature, but because of his own arrogant behaviour, his prejudices against

159. Ernest Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth*, p. viii (Preface).

160. *Ibid.*, p. vii (Preface).

161. *Ibid.*, p. viii (Preface).

162. Madanjit Kaur, 'A Documentary Evidence of the Sikh Reaction at Trumpp's translation of the Ādi Granth', *Punjab History Conference Proceedings* (Fourteenth Session, March 28-30, 1980, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1981), p. 223.

163. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*, p. 7.

the non-Christian religions, his unfamiliarity with the medieval Indian religious movements, his poor (low) opinion of everything Indian all combined to defeat the very purpose of his translation of the Sikh scriptures. He did not miss any opportunity that offered him to condemn and denigrate the Sikh religion. So far as the final outcome of his labours are concerned the following quotation from the petition seems to sum it up very appropriately. The petition relates. "...The translation made by Dr. Trumpp, who was employed by the India Office for the purpose, is bristling with sentences altogether wide of the meaning, so much so that one regrets the useless labour and the large amount of money spent in vain."¹⁶⁴ Barrier has drawn our attention to a specific contribution of Trumpp. In his opinion, "Trumpp made an inadvertent, albeit, negative contribution to Sikh studies in that he provided a controversial and much discussed overview with stress on the Hindu character of Sikhism. Trumpp's book gradually became seen as a historical statement that had to be confronted and proven wrong."¹⁶⁵

PINCOTT'S PAPERS ON SIKHISM

The challenge thrown by Trumpp was subsequently taken up by many Western and the Sikh scholars. The first Western writer to take up the challenge of Trumpp was Frederic Pincott, a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. He made it a special point to refute some of the notions wrongly held by Trumpp about the nature of Sikhism. His paper 'Sikhism in relation to Mohammanism'¹⁶⁶ which was also published in *A Dictionary of Islam*¹⁶⁷ under the title 'Sikhism' aims at refuting the following

164. Madanjit Kaur, 'A Documentary Evidence of the Sikh Reaction at Trumpp's translation of the *Ādi Granth*', *Punjab History Conference Proceedings* (Fourteenth Session, March 28-30, 1980, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1981), p. 222.
165. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 172.
166. Frederic Pincott, *Sikhism in Relation to Mohammanism* (London: W.H. Allen & Coy, 1885).
167. Frederic Pincott, 'Sikhism', *A Dictionary of Islam* edited by Thomas Patrick Hughes (Lahore: Premier Book House, 1964) (First 1885), pp. 583-594.

view propagated mainly by Trumpp : "It is a mistake, if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and Mohammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu, according to all his views, and if he had communion-ship with Musalmans and many of these even became his disciples, it was owing to the fact that Sufism, which all these Muhammadans were professing, was in reality nothing but a Pantheism, derived directly from Hindu sources, and only outwardly adapted to the forms of Islam. Hindu and Muslim Pantheists could well unite together, as they entertained essentially the same ideas about the Supreme: the Hindu mythology was not pressed on the Musalmans, as the Hindu philosophers themselves laid no particular stress upon it—the belief in the minor gods, the transient manifestations of the Supreme, being with them a matter of choice. On these grounds tolerance between Hindus and Turks is often advocated in the Granth and intolerance on the part of the Turks rebuked."¹⁶⁸ Pincott beginning exactly with the above quotation of Trumpp emphasizes "A careful investigation of the early Sikh traditions points strongly to the conclusion that the religion of Nanak was really intended as a compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism, if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a Mohammadan sect."¹⁶⁹ In this lengthy article the learned writer has laboured to elaborate the above view on the basis of verses from the *Ādi Granth*, traditions from the *Janamsākhī* literature, and by showing the affinity of the Sikh religious ideals and practices with that of Islam. The author has collected a large number of evidences from the Sikh sources in order to prove his view-point. Some of the points raised by the author are very sound and are relevant to any discussion concerning the relation of Sikhism to Islam. The author has also given brief account of the doctrines of Sikhism and history of the Sikh religion. In any meaningful discussion about the origin of Sikhism and its relation to Islam, Pincott's short but serious article would always be referred. However, the article suffers from author's ignorance of many facts of the Sikh history. Pincott has written two more articles on different aspects of Sikhism viz. "The arrangement of the hymns of the *Ādi Granth*,

168. Ernest Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth*, pp. ci-cii.

169. Frederic Pincott, 'Sikhism', *A Dictionary of Islam*, p. 583.

Holy Bible of the Sikhs'¹⁷⁰ and 'Sikhism in the Religious Systems of the World.'¹⁷¹ The later article was again reprinted in a symposium.¹⁷² In this article also, the learned scholar has made a serious attempt to describe the religious background of Sikhism, characteristic features of Sikhism, its main doctrines and a brief account of the Sikh history. This article may also be included among the scholarly writings of the Western scholars on Sikhism. The author's attitude is free from any bias and his analysis is deep and academic. We shall return to his understanding of the Sikh faith and tradition in the relevant chapters of this study.

In the period intervening between Trumpp and Macauliffe two more names may also be mentioned. The first name is that of the famous writer on the Sikh Chiefs, Lepel Griffin for his article entitled 'Sikhism and the Sikhs'¹⁷³ and the second one is of John J.H. Gordon, the author of *The Sikhs*,¹⁷⁴ which is a sympathetic short sketch of the Sikhs, including a history of the Sikh Gurus and their main teachings. This book includes two interesting short chapters on the 'Guru Granth and Sikh religious observances' and 'Sikhs under the British Crown'. This account reflects the current thinking at that time, and aims at being pro-British and pro-Sikh at the same time.

THE SIKH RELIGION BY MACAULIFFE

The Sikh reaction to Trumpp's translation of the *Ādi Granth* was its outright rejection for his derogatory comments regarding their Gurus, the scriptures and gross misrepresentation of their religion. In this regard they made a number of representations and addresses to the Punjab Government, to Lord Dufferin and to Lord Curzon to make reparation for the ridicule and contempt

170. Frederic Pincott, 'The Arrangement of the Hymns of the Ādi Granth, Holy Bible of the Sikhs', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XVIII, (London : Trubner & Co. July 1886), pp. 437-62.

171. Frederic Pincott, 'Sikhism' *Religious Systems of the World : A Contribution to the Study of Comparative Religions* (New York, 1901).

172. Macauliffe and others, *The Sikh Religion : A Symposium*, pp. 71-83.

173. Lepel Griffin, 'Sikhism and the Sikhs' *Great Religions of the World* (New York, 1901).

174. John J.H. Gordon, *The Sikhs* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First 1904).

which Trumpp had brought on their religion and to sponsor another project for correct translations.¹⁷⁵ Having failed to move the Government, the Sikhs turned to Macauliffe, a civil servant and a very keen and sympathetic student of the Sikh religion for many years—to request him to take up the job of translating their scriptures. They promised him every possible help in this project, including compensation for retirement from the public service, and the expenses attending the researches and publication of the work.¹⁷⁶ Macauliffe, who himself was also interested in this area of study, resigned his post as Divisional Judge in the Punjab in 1893, and accepted the project of translating the Sikh scriptures.¹⁷⁷ The Sikhs were fortunate in having persuaded Macauliffe, who after sixteen years of hard labour and great expense succeeded in producing his *magnum opus* acceptable to the Sikhs as true representative of their religion.

Max Arthur Macauliffe was born on September 29, 1837,¹⁷⁸ in Ireland. He was educated at Newcastle School, Limerick, Springfield College, and Queen's College, Galway. He was appointed to the Indian Civil Service at the examination of 1862, and was posted to the Punjab where he arrived in 1864. He reached the grade of Deputy Commissioner in 1882 and became a Divisional Judge two years later.¹⁷⁹ Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Alexandra Professor, Oriental College, Lahore introduced him to the Sikh studies.¹⁸⁰ During his stay in Punjab, Macauliffe devoted all his time to the study of Sikhism and its literature and published three articles on Sikhism in the *Calcutta Review* as early as in 1880-81.¹⁸¹

175. Macauliffe, 'The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs' (reprinted from the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, October 1910), pp. 2-3.

176. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs* (Allahabad : Christian Association Press, 1900), pp. 25-26.

177. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion : Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* (New Delhi : S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1978) (First 1909, Oxford), Vol. I, p. IX (Preface).

178. Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosb* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1974) (Third edition), p. 938.

179. *The Civil and Military Gazette Lahore*, March 19, 1913 as quoted in *Mahan Kosb*, *op.cit.*, p. 938.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 938.

181. 'The Diwali at Amritsar', *Calcutta Review*, Vol. LXXI, 1880, pp. 257-272; 'The Rise of Amritsar and the Alterations of the Sikh Religion', *Ibid.*, Vol. LXXII, 1881, pp. 48-75; and 'The Sikh Religion under Banda and its present condition', *Ibid.*, Vol. LXXIII, 1881, pp. 155-68.

From now onward much of his time and limited linguistic abilities were focussed on the study of Sikhism.¹⁸² In one of his articles he himself has related the story as to how he got interested in the study of Sikhism. He says, "Several years ago I attended the great Diwali fair at Amritsar, and it appeared to me to be worth describing in the *Calcutta Review*. In doing so, it became necessary for me to understand something of the Sikh religion. I accordingly read at the time several hymns of the Sikh Gurus. Having once begun them, I was tempted by the sublimity of their style and the high standard of ethics which they inculcated to continue. I, accordingly, devoted my spare time for several years to their study, and I generally kept a gyani or professional interpreter of the Granth Sahib in my employ."¹⁸³ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha was deputed for two years to teach the *Guru Granth Sahib* to Mr. Macauliffe on latter's request to Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha in 1883.¹⁸⁴ Thus we know that Macauliffe devoted many years to the study of the Sikh scriptures and history before he actually took up the project to translate the *Guru Granth Sahib* after resigning from the government job in 1893. Once he took upon himself the job of translation he spared neither time nor health nor money¹⁸⁵ and worked almost unremittingly at the task the Sikhs assigned to him.¹⁸⁶

Unlike Trumpp, Macauliffe did not entertain any bias against the non-Christian religions. In one of his communications to the Punjab Government in February 1892, he himself had maintained that, "My own views on religious matters being absolutely unsectarian, I would aim at producing a book acceptable to the Sikhs themselves. I hold no brief from any religious denomination, and would describe the Sikh religion as it is without the introduction of any opinion or comments

182. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 173.

183. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs* (Allahabad: Printed at the Christian Association Press, 1900), p. 25. "This paper was partially read before the Aryan Section of the Congress of Orientalists in Paris in 1897 and published in the April, July and October numbers of the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, for 1898".

184. Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, p. 939.

185. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 27.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

of my own."¹⁸⁷ As we now know, Macauliffe kept his promise to the last and almost identified himself with the traditional Sikh point of view. He worked in close association with the Gianis and was fortunate in having the assistance and guidance of some learned Sikh scholars—Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Bhai Nihal Singh and Sant Singh of Sialkot, Bhais Dit Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Rajinder Singh and Nihal Singh of Lahore, Bhais Sardul Singh Gyani (son of Gyan Singh Gyani), Prem Singh, Fateh Singh and Darbara Singh of Amritsar, Bhai Sant Singh of Kapurthala, Bhai Bhagwan Singh of Patiala, Bhai Dasaundha Singh of Ferozepur, etc.¹⁸⁸ Macauliffe was aware of the fact that the translation of the Oriental works done in Europe even by the eminent scholars was not acceptable to the native people. In order to avoid this pitfall and to achieve a pronounced object of producing a translation acceptable to the Sikh community, he submitted every line of his work to the most searching criticism of learned Sikhs. He would circulate his translations either in the form of rough printed proofs or typed copies among the knowledgeable persons for their suggestions and published invitation in the Sikh newspapers to the concerned Sikhs to visit him and offer their suggestions regarding the translation, if any.¹⁸⁹

After years of strenuous efforts and at the cost of great expenses, Macauliffe succeeded in finishing the voluminous manuscript by 1908 and made arrangements for its publication by the Oxford University.¹⁹⁰ It was first published in 1909 in six massive volumes.¹⁹¹ The six-volume set not only contains the translations of the major portions of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Dasam Granth* but also includes the lives of Sikh Gurus, their followers and contemporaries. Instead of giving separately, the translation have been interspersed throughout the narrative. This has been done in order to avoid the fear of the Sikhs that the translation at one place would amount to disrespect to the Granth

187. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 28.

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28; see also *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. XXIX-XXX (Preface).

189. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. IX (Preface).

190. Barrier, 'Trump and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 179.

191. Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* (Oxford University Press, 1909), Vols. 6.

Sahib which now for them is the embodiment of the living Guru and the only object of veneration. Volume one includes a lengthy introduction to Sikhism and the life of Guru Nanak; volume two discusses the lives of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das; volume three deals primarily with Guru Arjan Dev while the volume four covers the lives of Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Volume five describes the life and times of Guru Gobind Singh including an essay on Banda Singh and notation on *rāgs* or the musical measures of the Sikh hymns. The concluding volume provides short sketches on other contributors to the Granth Sahib such as Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas, Sheikh Farid and others.

Macauliffe began his work with a very clear object in his mind. He has enumerated a number of advantages of the study to the state, to the Sikhs and some of them of general nature.¹⁹² "One of the main objects of the present work", the author says, "is to endeavour to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which he (Trumpp) offered to their Gurus and their religion."¹⁹³ He further maintains that, "My translation will practically introduce a new religion to the world, which may derive advantage from the high ethical principles of the Sikh Gurus."¹⁹⁴ In the preface to *The Sikh Religion* also we hear him saying, "The author fondly hopes that this work, which contains an account of the last religion of the world which remains to be exploited, may escape the general fate."¹⁹⁵ Macauliffe thought that his work apart from being beneficial to the British administrators in India would also deepen the loyalties of the Sikhs to the state.¹⁹⁶ At another place, Macauliffe has very clearly stated, "It is because there is so little known even to professional scholars of the Sikh religion, because the little that is known is too often tainted with error, because the sacred books of the Sikhs contain instruction of such a high ethical literary standard that I devoted a large portion of my life to their study and elucidation."¹⁹⁷

192. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, pp. 26-27; Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. VII-VIII (Preface).

193. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. VII (Preface).

194. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 27.

195. Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp. XXXIII-XXXIV (Preface).

196. *Ibid.*, pp. XVIII-XIX (Preface); *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 27.

197. M.A. Macauliffe, 'How the Sikhs became a Militant Race', *The Sikh Religion; A Symposium* [Calcutta: Susil Gupta (India) Private Ltd., 1958], p. 27.

The main aim of Macauliffe thus was to present before the world an accurate account of the scriptures of the Sikhs and their tradition. This task naturally included the refutation of the disparaging statements of the earlier European scholars regarding the Sikh Gurus and their religion and the correction of those misrepresentations. In this section of introductory nature we can say that Macauliffe succeeded in achieving this goal to a larger extent. He not only succeeded in replacing Trumpp but also became an unchallenged authority on Sikhism in the West for many decades. He identified himself with the Sikh point of view to the extent that he is sometimes criticised for being too uncritical. This of course was one of the aims of his work. Having made a permanent place among the hearts of the Sikhs, this large-hearted gentleman and devout student of Sikhism passed away on March 15, 1913.¹⁹⁸ Minutes before he breathed his last, he was reciting the Japuji. His unbiased attitude, accurate translation of the Sikh scriptures and accounts of the lives of the Sikh Gurus would remain a lasting contribution to the Sikh studies and the study of world religions. The translation of the Sikh scriptures was omitted from the 'Sacred Books of the East' series but the labours of Macauliffe have amply made up for that historic omission.

DOROTHY FIELD AND THE SIKH RELIGION

One more small book that may be mentioned in this context is *The Religion of the Sikhs* by Dorothy Field.¹⁹⁹ It was first published in 1914, in the 'Wisdom of the East' series. The books in this series were primarily intended to be 'ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West,'²⁰⁰ and this indeed this small book is. This is a brief sympathetic Western interpretation of Sikhism including excerpts from Sikh scriptures. The book is not an original study, it is mainly based on one source, the monumental work of Macauliffe. It is divided into four chapters—the first outlines the life history of the Sikh Gurus and the fourth includes some selections from the sacred writings

198. Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, p. 938.

199. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, eds. L. Cranmer Byng and Dr. S.A. Kapadia (Delhi: ESS ESS Publications, 1976) (First, 1914).

200. *Ibid.*, p. 8 (Editorial note).

of the Sikhs in Macauliffe's translation. Chapters second and third are of interpretative nature and it is here that the author makes her own contribution by way of further clarifying some of the basic ideals of the Sikh theology. In the second chapter the author makes a study of the origin and originality of the Sikh religion in the context of Hinduism and Islam. In the third chapter the author has attempted to elucidate the basic theological ideals of Sikhism. The book, as we have seen earlier, is not an original study but in its organization and presentation, it definitely deserves mention.

A few years before the publication of his *magnum opus* Macauliffe had said, "Whatever may be thought of my work, I do not think that any European will ever again undertake a translation of the sacred book of the Sikhs. The difficulties and expense attending the work are enormous."²⁰¹ His prophetic saying stands even after the lapse of almost eight decades. No European scholar or institution after Macauliffe has ever planned such a prodigious project on the Sikh studies. It seems that because of the emergence of new effective factors and changed circumstances the Britishers' and for that reason the Westerners' interest in the Sikhs as religious community or a political power had already started abating. Even Macauliffe's work, inspite of the fact that he listed many advantages of his study, to the state, was not sponsored by it. Notwithstanding all the persuasions of Macauliffe, Barrier says, "The government refused to sponsor the publication or to associate openly with the written material".²⁰² It was only because of Macauliffe's own deep interest in the Sikh religion that such a huge work could be completed.

A NEW DEVELOPMENT

Years following the publication of Macauliffe's work, are almost barren so far as the Western studies of Sikhism are concerned. The British Government was no longer interested in such studies. The increased activities of the missionaries contributed to this growing dissatisfaction. The Orientalists, another agency

201. Macauliffe, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 28.

202. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*, p. 179.

operative in this area, preferred to focus somewhere else—the classical period. Moreover, the lingering doubt about the loyalties of the Sikhs to the state further alienated the Westerners' interest in them. Greenberger while analysing the Imperial literature of India during this period has characterized it as an 'era of doubt' growing into an 'era of melancholy'.²⁰³ The Sikhs now interested the Britishers only as a rich recruiting field. The secondary concern of the government seems to perpetuate the loyalties of the Sikh soldiers in particular and the Sikhs in general. The Western studies of Sikhism in this period mainly consist of small handbooks on the Sikhs and their traditions intended primarily for the use of military officers and civil administrators. Brief notices of the religion of the Sikhs in elaborate studies of medieval Indian religions and a few articles in the encyclopaedias are also available. Lack of originality is the characteristic feature of all these studies. They are mostly based on secondary source, and often on the work of Macauliffe. In this context, the names of the following authors may be mentioned without any elaborate introduction to the authors and their works: John Campbell Oman,²⁰⁴ James Bissett Pratt,²⁰⁵ Nicol Macnicol,²⁰⁶ J.N. Farquhar,²⁰⁷ J.E. Carpenter,²⁰⁸ H.A. Rose,²⁰⁹ A.H. Bingley,²¹⁰ C.H. Payne,²¹¹

203. Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).
204. John Campbell Oman, *Indian Life: Religious and Social* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889) pp. 138-151.
205. James Bissett Pratt, *India and Its Faiths* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), pp. 242-253.
206. Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1968) (First 1915), pp. 135-159; *The Living Religions of the Indian People* (New Delhi: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House), revised by M.H. Harrison, pp. 263-288.
207. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manoharlal, 1967) (First 1914), pp. 336-43., *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1967) (First 1920), pp. 336-41.
208. J.E. Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977) (First 1921), pp. 477-489.
209. H.A. Rose, 'Sikhs', *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* edited by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1967) (First 1920) Vol. XI, pp. 507-11; *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab & North-West Frontier Province* (Patiala: Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First, 1919). Vol. I, pp. 676-730.
210. A.H. Bingley, *Sikhs* (Patiala: Languages Department, Punjab 1970) (First, 1918).
211. C.H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs* (Patiala: Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First 1920).

R.E. Parry,²¹² and G.B. Scott.²¹³ Crowther's and Rice's Notes on the Sikhs and Falcon's Handbook on Sikhs for Regimental Officers may also be mentioned in this context. Lack of originality is the characteristic common feature of all these brief notes and accounts of the Sikhs. However, we shall consider the issues mentioned by Farquhar, Macnicol, Pratt, Carpenter, Rose, Bingley and others.

THE SIKHS BY ARCHER

After the lapse of almost three decades following Macauliffe, the Sikh studies attracted another serious Western scholar. He was John Clark Archer from the University of Yale. He came to Punjab in 1837 and stayed at Khālsā College, Amritsar, a great centre of Sikh learning at that time, with the renowned Sikh theologian, Bhai Jodh Singh. Archer's studies into Sikhism resulted in the production of a book which was published by the Princeton University.²¹⁴ As far as the state of the Sikh studies is concerned, there was a sea of change between the times of Macauliffe and Archer. Referring to the traditional interpreters of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Macauliffe had lamented that, "it would probably be an exaggeration to say that there are ten such men in the world. Of these few or none is capable of giving an English interpretation."²¹⁵ Commenting on the changed state of affairs, Archer says, "Studies of the Sikhs are already numerous and the materials for study are increasingly accessible."²¹⁶ He has further emphasized that "if his (Malcolm's) preference for Sikh writers was valid for his day, ours has yet further ground of confidence in the fruits of Sikh's own investigation of their history. Sikhism has begun to produce scholars of its own who are competent to deal not only with

212. R.E. Parry, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Patiala : Languages Department Punjab) (First 1921) (Archer J.C. 1923 at page 296).

213. G.B. Scott, *Religion and Short History of the Sikhs 1469-1930* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970) (First 1930).

214. John Clark Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas : A Study in Comparative Religions* (Princeton : University Press, 1946).

215. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. vi (Preface).

216. Archer, *The Sikhs*, p. vi (Preface).

Sikhism as religion but to interpret its relation to Sikh politics...."²¹⁷

The main aim of Archer in this study is to contribute to the discipline of comparative religion. The subtitle of the book, 'A Study in Comparative Religion' makes his aim amply clear. The author has repeatedly maintained this all through the book. Comparing this study with the other earlier studies the author states, "But all these works either deal exclusively with Sikh history and religion or else provide the general setting for the same. They do not undertake comparative appraisal; they are not, strictly speaking studies in comparative religion, whether with respect to the relation of religion to other disciplines of life or with reference to Sikhism in comparison with other faiths. The volume which this preface introduces now is by contrast with the others a study in comparative religion based upon a study of the Sikhs."²¹⁸

Even when making a detailed study of the development of the Sikh tradition, the author aims at deriving benefits for the comparative religion. Elaborating this point he says, "The five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value often bearing quite directly, for example, upon the major problems of comparative religions."²¹⁹ Although an exercise in comparative religions Archer's book mainly concerns itself with the study of Sikhism, albeit with the above aim in mind. To the author, Sikhism originated as an attempt to reconcile the Hindu and the Muslim religions. This conviction of the author is almost presupposition of this study. The author says in the beginning, "Their movement, which can be accounted for within the compass of the last five centuries, originated actually in an earnest hopeful effort towards the reconciliation, within India at least, of Hindu and Islamic orders and ideals."²²⁰ However, he loses hold of this thesis at the very early stage of the study and he studies Sikhism in relation to the Hindu, Muslim and later Christian traditions. His main focus now changes to discover the operative principles when two religious traditions

217. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

218. *Ibid.*, pp. vi-vii (Preface).

219. *Ibid.*, p. v (Preface).

220. *Ibid.*, p. v (Preface).

interact.²²¹ Thus the author wants to accomplish so many things in this book. Firstly, it is a study in comparative religions, secondly, it is the study of the development of the Sikh faith and tradition in relation to other religious traditions, thirdly it aims at studying the process of interaction in the development of a reconciliatory movement, and so on. His method of study can be very well summarised by another subtitle "Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition" of a recent publication devoted to the Sikh studies.²²² It is thus a study of the history of Sikhism from the perspective of a comparativist.

The first two chapters introduce the foreigner to the Sikhs and their religious beliefs and practices in their homeland—the Punjab. The third chapter is devoted to the description of Indian religious background of the religion of Guru Nanak with special focus on Kabir as the forerunner of the Guru. From the third chapter to the eleventh the main concern of the author is to elaborate the history of the Sikh tradition with the exception of the sixth chapter. In the sixth chapter the author has briefly described the teachings of Guru Nanak including a rendering of the Japuji, a composition of Guru Nanak and the basic text of Sikhism. In the final chapter entitled 'Timeless Truth and Reconstruction' the author attempts to sum up his study again with multiple concerns. He himself has informed us in the preface that chapter XII includes a comparative view of many things, in prospect, with some reference to the Sikhs' own prospective role in Indian reconstruction.²²³ In this concluding chapter, the author has made some suggestions for further studies of Sikhism in the context of the general discipline of comparative religion. He has also included a brief summary of the basic theological ideas given in the *Gurmat Nirnay* of Bhai Jodh Singh. The author has also outlined the basic principles for the cooperation of different religious traditions. Few concluding lessons from the study have been given at the end.

In addition to this book, the author has also contributed an article on the *Guru Granth Sahib*.²²⁴ He was with C.H. Loehlin

221. Archer, *The Sikhs*, p. vi (Preface).

222. *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*, editors Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies, Series, 1979). Vol. I.

223. Archer, *op.cit.*, p. vii (Preface).

224. John Clark Archer, 'The Bible of The Sikhs', *The Review of Religion*, January 1949.

on November 21, 1946 when they got a chance to have a look at the original manuscript of the *Ādi Granth* at Kartarpur.²²⁵ He passed away sometime before 1959.²²⁶

THE GOSPEL OF THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB BY GREENLEES

Six years after Archer's *The Sikhs*, was published *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib* by the well known theosophist Duncan Greenlees, in the World Gospel Series.²²⁷ It is also a comparative study of the Sikh scriptures but from a theosophist's concern. The author relates in the beginning, "It is based on the inevitable conclusion of any fair student that all the great religions and their scriptures come from the One Divine Source, in varying degrees of purity of transmission, and according to the needs and capacities of those to whom they come—the authentic Word of God to man."²²⁸ The main aim of the series is to offer in a cheap, handy and attractive form, the essence of each of the world's great scriptures, translated and edited with a deep and living sympathy for each of them.²²⁹ If we judge *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib* by the above stated norm we can say that the author has succeeded in doing justice to the aim of the series. Referring to the fruits of his labours, Harbans Singh says, "It ranks as the best compendium of Sikhism available."²³⁰

It was at the instance of a Sikh theosophist and a former associate of the I.N.A. in early 1947 that the Sikh scripture was also included in the projected series.²³¹ During the preparation of the volume the editor was in constant touch with many Sikh friends and the final draft was approved by Bhai Jodh Singh

225. Loehlin, 'A Westerner Looks at the Kartarpur Granth', *Punjab History Conference Proceedings* (First Session, November 12-14, 1965) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1966), p. 94.

226. Cathaline Alfor Archer, John Clark Archer, A Chronicle privately printed in 1959 as quoted in the above article by Loehlin.

227. Duncan Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib* (The World Gospel Series No. 8) (Adyar : The Theosophical Publishing House, 1952).

228. *Ibid.*, p. vi (Preface).

229. *Ibid.*, p. v (Preface).

230. Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism', *The Journal of Religious Studies* (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1970). Vol. II, No. 1, p. 78.

231. Greenlees, *op.cit.*, p. xi (Preface).

saying, "Yes ! From the doctrinal point of view your account is accurate....I congratulate you on the industry that you have put in this work."²³² The work thus, like Macauliffe's, has the approval of the Sikhs themselves.

The present volume includes a very lengthy introduction running to 198 pages. The author is of the opinion that the history of the Sikh Gurus and the Khālsā Panth is an indispensable part of their religion. "The Sikh Religion" he says, "has never been a philosophy of books, of theorists, but a discipline of life, an ideal of brotherhood inspired by passionate devotion to the highest, guided by the example of the Guru's own life, and interpreted in the life history of the Guru Khālsā Panth. Sikh history cannot be divorced from Sikh philosophy; it is its very life-blood."²³³ Keeping the above situation in mind, the author has furnished the life history of the Sikh Gurus and the struggles of the Khālsā Panth in the lengthy introductory essay. In addition to the introduction, to the status and nature of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, constitution and responsibilities of the Khālsā Panth, this essay also contains brief notes on the 'Name of God', 'Nāma Mārga or Nāma-Simran', 'The Living Guru' and 'On the Originality of Sikhism'. A brief catechism (pages CLXXIX to CLXXXVI) gives a peep into the nature of Sikh belief system. The main body of the book is divided into two parts and nine chapters. In the first part divided into eight chapters, the author has provided a translation of the selected verses from the Sikh scriptures relating to the basic ideas of the Sikh theology such as 'The Perfect Teacher', 'The Glory of God', 'Moral Man', 'The True Guru', 'The Divine Name', 'The Way to God', 'Union with the Beloved' and 'The Guru's Descent'. The second part of the book is a new rendering of the Japuji of Guru Nanak, the basic text of the Sikhs. The author has given his own detailed notes alongwith these translations to elaborate the basic Sikh beliefs and has also furnished many parallels from the scriptures of the world in order to illustrate the idea of basic unity of Divine revelation in the scriptures of the world. In brief, it is a deeply sympathetic account of the basic Sikh theological ideas based on the Sikh scriptures and illustrated by the examples from the scriptures of the other religions.

232. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 10.

233. *Ibid.*, p. XV (Preface).

LOEHLIN ON SIKHISM

We have seen that when on November 21, 1946 J.C. Archer of Yale University visited Kartarpur to have a look at the original copy of the *Ādi Granth*, he was accompanied by another Christian Missionary, C.H. Loehlin. But Loehlin unlike Archer stayed for more than three decades among the Punjabis, learnt their language and studied their scriptures.

Clinton Herbert Loehlin graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1920 and earned an M.A. in Psychology at Princeton University. He came to the Punjab in 1923 and with his wife served for thirty-five years in village work. He also taught in the Baring Union Christian College, Batala (Punjab). During the World War II he served with the British and Indian troops in Burma and Indo-China as a Y.M.C.A. representative. In 1957 he was granted the degree of Ph.D. by Hartford Seminary Foundation with a dissertation on 'The Granth of the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh and the Khālsā Brotherhood'. For a period of ten years he worked on a team to translate the Old Testament into Punjabi under the Bible Society of India.²³⁴ During his stay at Batala he also helped to found the Christian Institute of Sikh studies at the Baring College in 1966.²³⁵ By virtue of his job, he was deeply interested in the Sikh-Christian relations and arranged many inter-religious dialogues involving both the religious communities. He identified the common ground of interest and envisioned a great future for dialogue and cooperation between these two communities.²³⁶ His studies into Sikhism resulted in the production of two small books on the Sikhs and their scriptures. The first one was *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures* published in 1958,²³⁷ and the second one as we have already seen, with his Ph.D. dissertation on the *Dasam Granth*, which was issued in the book form in 1971.²³⁸ *The Sikhs*

234. C.H. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs* (London : Edinburgh House Press, 1966), p. 2.

235. C.H. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood* (Lucknow : Lucknow Publishing House, 1971), pp. 105-6 (Appendix II). Two Religious Research Institutes.

236. C.H. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, pp. 64-74.

237. C.H. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures* (Lucknow : Lucknow Publishing House, 1974) (First 1958).

238. C.H. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood* (Lucknow : Lucknow Publishing House, 1971).

and their Scriptures was subsequently issued in the Christian Approach Series with minor alterations and additions under the title *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*.²³⁹ In addition to these two books he has contributed a number of scholarly articles including 'Sikhism and Christianity',²⁴⁰ 'Some Christian Leaders in the Punjab',²⁴¹ 'Textual Criticism of the Kartarpur Granth',²⁴² etc.

In their foreword to *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures* Ganda Singh and Pritam Singh have observed, "It is an objective study and an admirable introduction to the subject for those who have neither the leisure nor the patience to go into the details of the history and religion of the Sikhs."²⁴³ True to the above observation the book presents a very brief introduction to the Sikh religion and its history. The author has involved so many aspects in this study that he has failed to deal with any one of these in detail and in depth. In the first three pages the author has attempted to sum up the geographical setting and cultural and political situation before the rise of the Sikhism. In the remaining eight pages of the first chapter he has given the whole history of the Guru period including the special contribution of each Guru to the formation of the Sikh tradition. In the second and the third chapters the author has discussed the racial roots of the Sikhs and some of the salient features of the Sikhs and the Singhs. The religious background of the Sikhism is described in the eighth and the ninth chapters where Hindu Bhakti and Sufism has been discussed in relation to Sikhism. However, the author has stated in the very first chapter that the message of Guru Nanak was one of peace and reconciliation : "There is no Hindu, and no Musalman." This was, says the author, the heart of the Guru's mission, which aimed at the reconciliation of these two warring communities

239. C.H. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikh* (London : Edinburgh House Press, 1966). In the Christian Approach Series, No. 8.

240. C.H. Loehlin, 'Sikhism and Christianity', *Religion and Society* (Bangalore : Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, March 1964), Vol. XI, No. 1, pp. 8-21.

241. C.H. Loehlin, 'Some Christian Leaders in the Punjab' *Punjab History Conference Proceedings* (First Session) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1966), pp. 194-208.

242. *Sikh Studies : Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition* (editors Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier), pp. 113-18.

243. Ganda Singh and Pritam Singh, 'Foreword', *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures*, p. v (Preface).

to the form a new brotherhood.²⁴⁴ The author again picks up the thread of historical development of Sikhism in the fourth chapter where he discusses the history of Sikhism from 1708 onward. The development of the Sikh orders is related in the tenth chapter. The fifth chapter aims at introducing the Sikh Granths in terms of their authors, teachings and difference in their status. The author has drawn comparisons with the Biblical writings in order to illustrate the nature of the Sikh scripture. The relevance of the Granth Sahib in the formation of the saintly life of Sadhu Sundar Singh has also been stated.²⁴⁵ The sixth chapter consists of translation of the portions of the *Sikh Rahit Maryādā* or the Sikh Code of Conduct. The seventh chapter provides an abridged version of Bhai Jodh Singh's paper on the theological concepts of Sikhism. The Sikh doctrine of grace has been emphasized as it can be compared with the Christianity. The eleventh chapter very briefly introduces some of the holy places of the Sikhs. In the twelfth chapter the author has given a translation of some selected passages from the Sikh Scriptures. In the postscript, the scope of further cooperation between the Sikhs and the Christians has been explored. The book includes two appendices. The first appendix contains five tables relating to the Gurus, *bhagats*, the genealogies of the Gurus, some similarities and differences of Sikhism with other religious traditions and glossary. Appendix II includes an article on the Sikhs in California. So far as the organisation of the material is concerned, it is relatively better organised in *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, a reproduction of *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures* with minor alterations and additions of one special chapter entitled 'The Christian Approach'.²⁴⁶

The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khālsā Brotherhood is a better organised study. In justification of this study the author states, "One reason for another contribution to the subject is that this one is by a Westerner who has spent the better part of forty years among the Sikhs in the Punjab. It probably presents a point of view that, which is somewhat 'different' from both the prevailing Western and also

244. C.H. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures*, p. 4.

245. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

246. C.H. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, pp. 64-74.

Indian view-points."²⁴⁷ The other points of view regarding the Guru are related thus, "was Guru Gobind Singh, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'a misguided patriot' who in the opinion of another friendly Indian critic, turned Sikhism from spiritualism to militarism? That he was a mighty warrior no one can doubt; but that did not necessarily make him militarist. This militaristic interpretation seemed prevalent in the West, so this question was in the writer's mind when in 1955 he commenced research on the subject under the Hartford Seminary Foundation."²⁴⁸ The first chapter of this study is devoted to the life and works of Guru Gobind Singh. The second chapter is important as it discusses the status and purpose of the *Dasam Granth*. The Sikh attitude to the caste and relation with the Hindus have also been discussed in brief. In the concluding paragraphs the author has attempted to sum up the new development of Sikhism: "The Gurus incorporated the Hindu pantheon in their Granths, and accepted much of the Hindu theology, even though they rejected Hindu religious practices; but the form of Hinduism they accepted was not the orthodox Hinduism of the Sanātandharm (ancient faith), but *Bhakti*, Hinduism in the *sant* tradition, teaching salvation by grace, through loving devotion to the True Name. Instead of the monistic Absolute in it, far beyond human comprehension, there is a belief in a personal God who loves and who can be loved. Guru Gobind Singh even pictures him as a God who suffers with his people. In the suffering of the saints thou dost suffer (*Tria Charittar*, Verse 388). The word *parshād*, grace, occurs at the head of every chapter of the *Ādi Granth* and many of the *Dasam Granth*, and constantly emphasizes salvation by unmerited grace. This cuts at the root of asceticism which sought to earn, and in a way, compels the grant of *mukti* (cessation of rebirths) by the Supreme Impersonal Absolute.

"This *bhakti* cult was an old Hindu development, coming to Gurus from Ramanuja in the eleventh century, and Ramananda through his disciple Kabir in the fifteenth century. It emphasized devotion rather than speculation. What was new was the organization the Gurus developed in their Panth (Path).

247. C.H. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*, p. III (Preface).

248. *Ibid.*

This organization culminating in the Khālsā of Guru Gobind Singh, enabled this new religion to survive persecution and absorption, and to transmit to modern generations, a religion of grace and loving devotion to Personal God.”²⁴⁹ Chapter third is devoted to the study of each individual composition of the *Dasam Granth*. It is a lengthy chapter (pp. 17-56) and consists of the main fruits of the author's labours. In the fourth chapter, the author has offered a contrast between the two Granths of the Sikhs. He states, “The main difference is that of purpose. The *Ādi Granth* aims at peace of mind, the *Dasam Granth* at readiness for war.”²⁵⁰ He further clarifies, “Resting on a common theological foundation, the *Ādi Granth* has taken form as a temple, the *Dasam Granth* as a fortress.”²⁵¹ If the eighth chapter consisting of English translations of the selected passages from the *Dasam Granth* is allowed to add to these four chapters the main study of the Granth ends here. But the author as in his former volume has involved some other aspects in this study too. The fifth chapter provides a study of the *Hukamnāmās* of the Guru. The sixth chapter traces the similarities between the Bhagavadgītā and the mission of Guru Gobind Singh. On the basis of Mohan Singh Oberoi, the author seems to concede that the *Gobind Gita* is a commentary on the Gita by Guru Gobind Singh.²⁵² In chapter seven the attitude of Guru Gobind Singh towards Islam and Muslims has been studied. The author has concluded that the Guru was not against Islam as such, he was fighting against the evil that had afflicted Islam.²⁵³ This work also includes four appendices. The first appendix makes a very strong plea for the need of textual and historical criticism of the Sikh scriptures with special reference to the Kartarpur Granth. Appendix second includes brief introduction to the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala and the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies, Batala with reference to their prospective role in bringing close the religious communities in the Punjab. Appendix three

249. C.H. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*, pp. 15-16.

250. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

251. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

252. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

253. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

includes the historical tables as in the earlier volume. Appendix four gives the table of contents of the Granth of the Tenth Guru.

The author's attitude as revealed from these studies is sufficiently positive and sympathetic. He worked in close association with Sikh scholars, such as Ganda Singh, Pritam Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh and many others. The motives behind these books are religious unlike most of the earlier studies which were inspired mainly by political considerations. The author was a missionary and had the required religious perspective for the study of the Sikh Scriptures. Like Archer and Greenlees his study is also comparative as he has instituted many comparisons between Sikhism and other religious traditions with special emphasis on Christianity.

CONTEMPORARY STUDIES OF SIKHISM : BARRIER, McLEOD, COLE

Objectivity demands that our historical survey of the Western writings on Sikhism should stop here as the Western writers beyond this point are our contemporaries and they are still actively engaged in the study of Sikhism. These contemporary Western writers on Sikhism include important scholars such as N. Gerald Barrier, W.H. McLeod, W. Owen Cole, etc. By virtue of their importance these names cannot be excluded from any survey of the Western studies of Sikhism. Coming after the independence of the country these writers represent a new phase of the Western Studies of Sikhism. They are inspired more by academic than by political and missionary concerns animating most of the earlier writings. For these reasons we are including a brief introduction to their contributions also, but with an awareness of their contemporaneous status. Historically McLeod should be introduced first, but because of his special position we shall first briefly mention the works of N. Gerald Barrier and W. Owen Cole.

Norman Gerald Barrier was educated at the Duke University where he obtained his M.A. degree in History in 1964. He donned the doctoral robes in 1966 and the subject of his dissertation was *Punjab Politics and Disturbances of 1907*. His special interests are : emergence of sub-national political movements; and the bibliographical problems relating to that

period. Barrier knows Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. He has spent some time in England, India and Pakistan in connection with his research. He is Professor of History at the University of Missouri-Columbia, USA. Although his main interest remains history, his two bibliographies i.e. *The Sikhs and their Literature*²⁵⁴ and the *Banned*²⁵⁵ contain very useful information for the Sikh studies. He is also the co-editor of two very important volumes on Sikh history and Sikh studies with Harbans Singh²⁵⁶ and Mark Juergensmeyer.²⁵⁷ We have already referred to his article on 'Trumpp and Macauliffe : Western Students of Sikh History and Religion'. Barrier has thus enriched the field of Sikh studies by collecting very useful information on the lesser known period of its history. His introductory essay to *The Sikhs and their Literature* offers a very scholarly analysis of the Sikh resurgence and its literature. His labours in collecting the source materials would go a long way in promoting objective and critical studies of Sikhism.

William Owen Cole retired as a teacher of Religious Studies at the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education, Bishop Otter College, Chichester. Prior to this, he spent twelve years at Leeds where his interest in the Sikh studies was nurtured. Cole by his very deep concern and profession is actively engaged in improving the inter-community relations, and promoting inter-faith understanding. The Great Britain society is fast developing into a multi-faith society. It was in this multi-faith society that he first encountered Sikhism. His interest in Sikhism goes back to 1968 at the time when the Sikhs were preparing for the quincentenary celebration of Guru Nanak. Later on, he developed so much interest in the Sikh studies that he completed his M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in this area. Cole found in S. Piara Singh Sambhi—an immigrant to England and a well educated Sikh and writer—a dependable companion and

254. N. Gerald Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature (1849-1919)* (Delhi : Manohar Book Service, 1970).

255. N. Gerald Barrier, *Banned : Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India 1907-1947* (Delhi : Manohar Book Service, 1976) (Missouri, 1974).

256. Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (editors), *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*.

257. Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier (eds) *Sikh Studies : Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*.

mentor in Sikh studies. He published his first book on the Sikhs with S. Piara Singh Sambhi as co-author.²⁵⁸ His M.Phil. dissertation is devoted to the study of *The Guru in Sikhism*²⁵⁹ and Ph.D. thesis explores the attitude of Guru Nanak and early Sikhism to the Indian religious beliefs and practices.²⁶⁰

In addition to these studies in Sikhism Cole's publication include *World Faiths in Education* (Allen & Unwin, 1978), *Five Religions in the Twentieth Century* (Hulton Educational Publications, 1981), *Religion in the Multi-Faith Schools* edited by him. Cole has also lectured extensively on Sikhism and has contributed many scholarly papers on Sikhism to the reputed journals. He delivered Guru Nanak Memorial Lecture in 1983, under the auspices of Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi. Cole was also a Visiting Professor in the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala in 1983.

Regarding *The Sikhs*, the authors have stated, "the purpose of our book is to provide multi-dimensional introduction to the Sikh faith, covering practices as well as beliefs. For the most part the approach will be descriptive and explanatory but attention will also be given to various ways in which Sikhism has been regarded by scholars."²⁶¹ The authors have fully succeeded in this limited goal and the book has come to be regarded as the best introduction to Sikhism in English. It is useful for both the layman and the specialized student. The authors in addition to introducing the primary and the secondary sources for the study of Sikhism have also described the religious background of the Sikhism. *The Sikhs* briefly introduces the ten Sikh Gurus and the Sikh scriptures. Two chapters devoted to the Sikh religious practices are 'The Gurdwara and Sikh Worship' and 'Daily Life, Ceremonies and Festivals'. The fifth chapter provides an analysis of the basic Sikh religious ideas such as, 'God', 'Man', 'Mukti', 'Nām',

258. W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi, *The Sikhs : Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1978).

259. W. Owen Cole, *The Guru in Sikhism* (London : Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd. 1982.).

260. W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708* (London : Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1984).

261. Cole and Sambhi, *The Sikhs*, p. XII (Preface).

'Simran', 'Guru', etc. The seventh chapter makes a brief study of the ethical ideas and virtues maintained in Sikhism. The eighth chapter is of very special interest as it briefly describes the attitude of Sikhism towards other religions. The present introduction is not confined to the Sikhs in the Punjab but also includes a chapter on the life and problems of the Sikhs in Canada, U.S.A., Britain, etc. The appendices include the English translation of the *Rahat Maryādā* (Sikh Code of Conduct) and the *Ardās* (The Sikh Prayer). It is the two brief sections from this book i.e. 'The nature and role of Guru' and 'The attitude of Sikhism towards other religions' that Cole has elaborated in his M.Phil. and Ph.D. thesis and have subsequently issued in the book forms. *The Guru in Sikhism* is the first full length Western study of one of the most central doctrines and institution of Sikhism. The nature and the role of the Guru in Sikhism is varied, and complex. How the institution of Guruship in Sikhism has developed is a very fascinating area of study. In this study the basic concept of Guru has been studied in its varied historical forms. The introductory chapter attempts to describe the idea of Guru in the Indian tradition against which the Sikh concept has been studied. The second and the third chapters are of historical nature and describe the ten Sikh Gurus and their role in the development of Sikhism, beginning with Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. The fourth chapter aims at studying the Sikh Concept of Guru in the teachings of Guru Nanak. The fifth and the sixth chapters study the two historical forms of the institution of Guruship i.e. the Guru Ganth and the Guru Panth. These two forms in reality point to the same basic idea of Guru in Sikhism, as it has developed on the basis of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikh idea of the Guru thus has been elaborated in all its manifold and complex forms. The seventh chapter aims at studying various practical implications of this rich, varied and fundamental concept of Sikhism. With this study the Western studies of Sikhism have reached a stage where the full length study of the individual aspects of Sikhism by the Western writers has been initiated.

The Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708 aims at providing an exposition of the attitude of Guru Nanak and the early Sikhism towards its religious milieu and its religious beliefs and practices. Divergent views have been held by the scholars

regarding Sikhism's relation to its religious background. Some scholars regard Sikhism as a reform movement of Hinduism and others regard it as an attempt at reconciling and synthesizing the two conflicting traditions of Islam and Hinduism. There is a third more important view that Sikhism is a new world religion based on the original revelation of Guru Nanak. All these generally held theories find evidence within the tradition itself to support their point of view. But no systematic attempt had so far been made by any scholar to collect all these evidences and arrive at some coherent view of the problem. Cole's study aims at providing a systematic exposition of the problem by studying the attitude of Guru Nanak and early Sikhism towards the earlier religious beliefs and practices, based on the evidences of the hymns of the Sikh Gurus and the *Janamsākhīs*.

In the first chapter the author has identified the religious milieu of the early Sikhism on the basis of references found in the hymns of Guru Nanak and the later Gurus. In the next two chapters he has endeavoured to demonstrate the attitude of early Sikhism towards the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus, Muslims, Yogis, Jains and the like, which forms its religious milieu. In the fourth chapter the author takes the above inquiry further but sources here are the *Janamsākhīs*. The *Janamsākhīs* narrate many encounters and dialogues of Guru Nanak with his contemporary religious leaders and groups. The fifth chapter is devoted to tracing the development of the Sikh faith and tradition under the later Gurus and showing the social, political and historical reasons for the subsequent changes in their religious response to the Hindu and Muslim faiths and traditions.

The author rightly concludes that the faith founded by Guru Nanak does not outrightly disregard any contemporary religious tradition by making any exclusive claim to truth. Instead the Guru seems to have approved the multi-faith society. His main concern was religious life actually lived. He disregarded and criticised those beliefs and practices which tended to obstruct rather than open up avenues of faith in God and its manifestation in active social life. He, however, disapproved of those religious beliefs and practices which tended to develop, in his view, an anti-social and unethical attitude such as Yoga, Jainism and all varieties of Shaktism. This

insight is very much relevant for the multi-faith society and the inter-faith dialogue. The author says, "On the evidence of the *Ādi Granth* the conclusion must be reached that Guru Nanak rarely expressed attitudes to Hinduism and Islam as such. He did not consider them to be fundamentally wrong but to be composed of many elements some pointing to the truth, many away from it. To attain the truth however, it was necessary to be more than a Hindu or a Muslim, one must possess direct knowledge of God through his grace."²⁶² He further explains: "It is the contention of this study that Guru Nanak was single mindedly concerned to confront people with the truth as it had been revealed to him."²⁶³ The re-examination of the sources thus have befittingly shown the inadequacies of the already held general theories of the Sikh response to other faiths, their beliefs and practices. The author has added a new dimension to the Sikh studies and shown its potentials and significance in playing a leading role in the emerging multi-faith societies and inter-faith dialogue on the bases of the elaboration of the Sikh attitude towards its religious milieu. The present study in part is a correction of W.H. McLeod's view that Guru Nanak regarded conventional Hindu belief and Islam as fundamentally wrong.²⁶⁴ Cole has set up an unequivocal goal for the present undertaking—to make use of the insights of Sikhism to the problems of contemporary multi-faith society: "Hopefully the study now being completed will be seen as a contribution to the process of freeing Sikhism from the influences of history so that its timeless message may be rediscovered and applied to the changed circumstances of the late twentieth century."²⁶⁵ Thus Cole has significantly broadened and enriched the field of the Western studies of Sikhism.

In our present survey W.H. McLeod is not only the last but also most important scholar on Sikhism. W.H. McLeod is a New Zealander who spent nine years teaching in Punjab. Having graduated from the University of Otago in Dunedin, he came to India in 1958 and spent five years as a secondary school teacher in Kharar, in Ropar district. In 1963 he proceeded to

262. Cole, *Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708*, pp. 276-77.

263. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

264. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

265. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

the School of Oriental and African Studies in London where he wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the 'Life and Doctrine of Guru Nanak' under the supervision of A.L. Basham. After returning from England in 1965 he taught in the History Department of B.U.C. College, Batala for four years. During the year 1969-70 he was awarded Smuts Fellowship at the University of Cambridge. In 1971 he returned to his University Otago, where he is a professor of History.

McLeod though New Zealander by birth is now a leading scholar of Sikhism in the West. His objective, historical and linguistic analysis of the Sikh writings has taken the Western studies of Sikhism far ahead of the previous efforts. According to Cole, "McLeod's purpose in undertaking his research was to subject the early lives of Guru Nanak to the same critical analysis that has been used on other documents of a similar kind, especially the Christian Gospels in an attempt to discover the Nanak of history behind that of faith."²⁶⁶ His application of rigorous historical methodology to the traditions relating to the life of Guru Nanak, has put even the learned Sikh scholars on the defensive. One may question the relevance of his methodology for the traditional Sikh literature and may disagree with his interpretations and conclusions, but no one can doubt his academic competence, familiarity with the Sikh literary sources and his extensive labours. He works in close association with many Sikh scholars but his interpretations and conclusions are his own, in which he often differs from his Sikh friends. McLeod's inclusion in this study would be doing more injustice than honour to the labours of a devoted scholar, as it requires a full length independent study to assess and evaluate his contributions. However, no survey of the Western studies of Sikhism can be complete without McLeod's mention, and hence the inclusion.

His first book in the area of Sikh studies appeared in 1968, and it was the revised version of his Ph.D. thesis.²⁶⁷ The main aim of the study was to discover the Nanak of history by subjecting the traditional Sikh literature concerning Guru's life to rigorous historical methodology, to provide a systematic

266. Cole, *Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708*, p. 4.

267. W.H. McLeod, *Gurū Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

statement of his teachings and to make an attempt to fuse the glimpses provided by the traditional biographies with the personality emerging from the teachings.²⁶⁸ His book came as a challenge to Sikh scholarship and invoked varied reactions. He was criticised for rejecting many Sikh traditions of the teachings of Guru Nanak. The book sets high standards of critical scholarship. The implications of his study and conclusions are far more deeper and we should be contented here with the above brief introduction. In 1975 appeared another small book by McLeod consisting of five essays.²⁶⁹ The first four essays are the revised version of the four lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge, in 1970, under the auspices of the Faculty of Oriental Studies.²⁷⁰ The first essay introduces the Sikh community and its evolution. The second essay explains the *Janamsākhī* tradition. The third essay provides an introduction to the cohesive ideals and institutions in the history of the Sikh Panth. In the fourth essay, we find an introduction to the Sikh Scriptures. The final essay studies the caste factor in the structure of the Sikh community. The main aim of the learned scholar through these essays is to show that the evolution of the Sikh community, beginning as a system of interior devotion to clearly-defined belief laying powerful stress upon martial prowess and external symbols was in reality a logical and consistent process. His third book, *Early Sikh Tradition* appeared in 1980.²⁷¹ McLeod has been criticised for his ruthless rejection of the many *sākhīs* from the *Janamsākhī* literature as an unreliable source of the life of Guru Nanak. But McLeod never denied the significance of the *Janamsākhī* literature so far as the later development of the faith in the 17th and 18th centuries is concerned. The *Early Sikh Tradition* is a comprehensive attempt to discuss the origin, formation, nature and function of the *Janamsākhī* literature. It is a work of very profound and critical scholarship, unattained by any Sikh or

268. W.H. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1968), p. vii (Preface).

269. W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1975).

270. *Ibid.*, p. vii (Preface).

271. W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition : A Study of the Janamsākhīs* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1980).

non-Sikh scholar so far in the field of Sikh studies. Any brief comment of general nature about this work would be doing injustice to the merit of the work and labours of the author. The same year (1980) Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, published the *B 40 Janamsākhī* translated and edited by McLeod.²⁷² It is a new addition to the published *Janamsākhī* literature, maintaining high standards of critical editing. In 1984 appeared another work of ripe scholarship translated and edited by McLeod in the Series, 'Textual Sources for the Study of Religion'.²⁷³ The series is primarily intended to provide essential texts in major faiths in reliable new translations. Each book includes whole range of types of literature, dealing not only with the texts of formal theology but also concerning liturgy and legend, folklore and faith, mysticism and modern thought, political issues, poetry and popular writings.²⁷⁴ The series is primarily designed for the advanced students. In the seven chapters of the *Textual Sources* McLeod has included introductions and translations of the texts dealing with the Sikh literature, the Gurus, the Scriptures, the Khālsā and Rahit, the Liturgy, Diversity within the Panth and modern works. Author's selection of material is very wise and he has put the representative Sikh literature, dealing with the Sikh faith and the tradition in this volume. By all standards this is the best anthology relating to the textual sources on Sikhism. His introductory remarks regarding the different types of literature are very appropriate and enlightening and translations dependable.

Recently the Columbia University has published another scholarly work by McLeod entitled : *The Sikhs : History, Religion and Society*.²⁷⁵ The book no doubt presents masterly analysis of the five centuries of Sikh history, religion and society. However, in this book also the learned author is insisting on some of his interpretations already refuted by well-

272. W.H. McLeod (Translator and Editor), *The B 40 Janamsākhī* (Amritsar : Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980).

273. W.H. McLeod (Editor and Translator), *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1984).

274. John R. Hinnells (General Editor), *Ibid.*, p. vii (General Introduction).

275. W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs : History, Religion and Society* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1989).

meaning Sikh scholars as distortions of the facts. McLeod is still actively engaged in the study of Sikhism and we expect many more volumes from his mature scholarship. McLeod is not only the last but also the most important scholar of the Sikh studies.

It may be seen from the foregoing survey that a large number of writers from diverse fields of activity, with varying degrees of competence and a variety of concerns have contributed to the Western writings on Sikhism. Various historical forces and situations have lent their own colour to these writings. However, behind this veil of bewildering diversity, a unified and persistent tradition of Western exploration and interpretation of Sikhism has steadily grown. Individual author's efforts have contributed to the growth and enrichment of this tradition. Beginning with casual notices of the Sikhs, it has developed into a full grown, independent tradition of interpretation. Our efforts in the following chapters would be to explore and explain the Western perspective on the Sikh tradition and faith.

CHAPTER 3

WESTERN PERSPECTIVE ON THE SIKH TRADITION

In the preceding chapter we have attempted to give an outline of the Western writings on Sikhism, during the last two centuries, including also brief accounts of the authors. In the present chapter we propose to explore the Western perspective on the Sikh religious tradition, the understanding and image of the Sikh tradition, emerging out of the Western writers' efforts. Western writings on Sikhism, as is clear by now, is the result of an encounter of the Western people with the Sikhs.

ENCOUNTER, DIALOGUE AND IMAGE FORMATION

Encounters between nations and civilizations are not much different from the encounters between the individuals. Both the participants get enriched in the process of discovering each other. Their understanding and images of each other do not remain static. They keep on changing with the development of relations. The process of encounter, dialogue and image formation thus is a dynamic process. Milton Singer, a noted American anthropologist, has drawn a very fine distinction between various types of dialogues going on simultaneously on different levels in the process of image formation, while discussing the Western image of India. According to him, of the several dialogues, first is the dialogue between image and reality. An image, which contains some elements of truth is always responsive to changes in reality. A second dialogue takes place between the Western image of India and Indian self-image. The nations learn from each other like self-conscious individuals. A third conversation, according to the author, takes place between the image, one country holds of another and

the psychological needs, fears and hopes projected into these images. An image may sometimes reflect more about the psychology of its holder than about any reality to which it purportedly refers. Finally, the author maintains that there is a dialogue between what society and culture contributes to an image and what an individual brings to it.¹ From the above classification of dialogues we can see that many a creative and dynamic forces keep interacting in the process of image formation.

INDIA'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE WEST AND ITS CHANGING IMAGES IN THE WEST

History of India's connection with the West is traced back to a considerably early period. Herodotus has given a very fascinating description of the fabulous and opulent India.² There is said to be an Indian embassy to Augustus Caesar.³ Megasthenes, an ambassador to the Maurya Court in Patliputra and Alexander's scholarly officers, have given very detailed and vivid account of Indian life.⁴ St. Thomas Didymus, the Apostle is said to have preached the gospel in Malabar as early as in A.D. 52.⁵ Vasco de Gama arrived at Calicut in 1498.⁶ The first Englishman to visit India was Father Thomas Stevens, a Jesuit who went out to Goa in 1579.⁷ In 1583 a party of English merchants with a letter from Queen Elizabeth went to Emperor Akbar. Three of them arrived at the Imperial Court at Agra in 1585 after making a very adventurous journey.⁸ This first phase of Europeans' and Britishers' connections with India ended with the end of Sir Thomas Roe's embassy at Jahangir's Court in 1618.

1. Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (London : Pall Mall Press, 1972), p. 12.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

5. P. Thomas, *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan* (London : Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), p. 12.

6. H.G. Rawlinson, 'India in European Literature and Thought', *The Legacy of India* (edited by G.T. Garat) (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1937) (Second, 1951), p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 27; Richard C. Barnett, 'Early English Impressions of India' in *Images of India* (edited by B.G. Gokhale) (Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1971), p. 16.

8. Rawlinson, *The Legacy of India* (ed.), pp. 27-28.

Sir Thomas Roe was King James' ambassador from 1615-1618.⁹ The real and meaningful encounter with the West begins with the establishment of the East India Company. On December 31, 1599, the East India Company received its Charter. It was a concession for fifteen years, granted to George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, and 215 knights, aldermen and merchants. In April 1600, five ships under the command of James Lancaster were sent to Sumatra and Java. By 1618, the Company had located factories in five places and established numerous trading posts elsewhere.¹⁰ This marks the fateful beginning of encounter of India with the West having very deep, far-reaching and manifold implications for India as well as for the West. With the expansion of the Company and its assumption of political dimensions came the travellers, missionaries, scholars etc., the real ambassadors of cultural exchange. Their arrival intensified and broadened further the scope of dialogue between the West and India.

West's general image of India has kept on changing with the change in the historical situations and the growth and expansion of the personal contacts and relations. The earlier image of India held in the West was that of a country of great wealth, wonders and philosophers. Accounts of Strabo, Horace, Dionysius, Herodotus are full of the details depicting India as an opulent and fabulous country. Herodotus says that all Indian animals are bigger than those of Europe, except horses. He and other early writers describe eels in Ganges 300 feet long, ferocious dogs that fight lions, monkeys that roll rocks on their pursuers, one horned horses with heads like deer and serpents eighty and two cubits long. Among the fabulous races described in these early accounts are a wild tribe with heels in front and toes turned backward, who have no mouths and live on the smell of roast beef and the odours of flowers and fruits; a tribe with ears that hang down, to their feet and are used as covers at night; and another whose women conceive at the age of five and are old at eight. Many Indian customs and traits are recorded: a love of finery and ornament paired with a love of simplicity, the marrying of many wives, the burning of wives upon the death of their husband, and exorcising by passing

9. Richard C. Barnett, *Images of India* (ed.), p. 18.

10. *Ibid.*

smooth ebony rollers over the surface of the body.¹¹ An Indian embassy to Augustus Caesar included eight naked servants who presented gifts consisting of a man born without arms, large snakes, a serpent ten cubits long, a river tortoise three cubits long, and a partridge larger than a vulture. The embassy also included an ascetic who burned himself at Athens.¹²

The purported wonders of Indian land with strange and astonishing animals, plants, people and its rich wealth of gold, silver, precious stones, spices lured many travellers to take voyage to the country and to establish commercial links with them. With the establishment of regular contacts, the setting of trade centres and the political victories of the Company, the change occurred in their attitude. The fabulous and wonderful land of the past became the "whiteman's burden". To justify British occupation of India, all-round degeneration of the people and their institutions was projected and propagated in a very systematic campaign.

The old image of the land fades away and a new image replaces it. The moral and political institutions of the West compared to the degenerated institutions were far superior, and having universal implications. The Indian people were labelled by Rudyard Kipling and others as "the lesser breeds without the law."¹³ Some of the reasons for India's degenerated conditions identified by Katherine Mayo in her book *Mother India* are as follows: "Child marriage, subordination of wives to husbands, low status of widows, unsanitary and unskilled midwives, *Purdah*, *devdāsī*, worship of idols at Kālighāt and sickness (cholera and malaria, plague, hookworm). Indian medicines; dirty water and unsanitary conditions in Benaras, the Holy city, in village tanks and wells, untouchables; Brahmans as seen by Southern non-Brahmans; high marriage cost, rapacious moneylenders, unproductive hoardings, and shameless begging; the sacred cow, sick dogs, cruelty to animals; lies without shame; trappings of parliamentary government without reality; Hindu-Muslim quarrels; the educated unemployed with their calling cards engraved "B.A. failed" and "B.A. plucked",

11. Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), p. 13.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

their unwillingness to work with their hands in agriculture, their remoteness from villages and opposition to education of women and untouchables.”¹⁴ Miss Mayo’s list includes many corrupt religious practices. But the missionaries made it a special point to portray India as the land of heathens, idolatrous and barbarous people. They were impelled to project this image of the people by the considerations of propagating the Gospel in India. The following poem entitled “The Heathen Mother”, which formed the part of the nineteenth century children book amply expresses the above dominant attitude of some of the missionaries :

“See that heathen mother stand
Where the sacred current flows;
With her own maternal hand
Mid the waves her babe she throws.
Hark ! I hear the piteous scream;
Frightful monsters seize their prey,
Or the dark and bloody stream
Bears the struggling child away.
Fainter now, and fainter still,
Breaks the cry upon the ear;
But the mother’s heart is steel
She unmoved that cry can hear.
Send, oh send the Bible there,
Let its precepts reach the heart
She may then her children spare
Act the tender mother’s part.”¹⁵

Norman D. Palmer referring to the activities and attitude of the early American Protestant missionaries in India says, “For some decades most missionaries had an ambivalent attitude towards India. Their dedication to the people whom they served was blended with a strongly critical view of Hinduism, and of various Indian social practices and customs and with conscious and unconscious feeling of superiority in their relations with the heathen Hindoos.”¹⁶ “To a great extent”, writes Pathak, “their reactions towards Hindu religion and thought are not favourable. The missionaries who came to India in the first half

14. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

15. As quoted by Milton Singer, *Ibid.*, p. 19.

16. Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism* (Delhi : Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1967), Foreword, p. vii.

of the nineteenth century openly declared India to be a benighted land which could be raised only through the message of the Gospel. The missionary literature of this period is full of references to the spiritual misery of the people of India.”¹⁷ Pathak further relates, “They helped in the formation of attitudes and images in the minds of the general public in America. The missionaries were largely responsible for creating the popular image of India as a land of backwardness and superstition in America.”¹⁸

However, there were some people of genuine scholarly interests from among the traders, travellers, the functionaries of the Company, civil and military officials and the missionaries. They learnt the language and studied and translated the classical Indian writings. With the endeavour of these scholarly people emerged India’s image of a treasury of ancient wisdom, a land of deep spirituality as opposed to the Western materialistic attitude and leanings. The translations of the Bhagavadgītā, the Upanishads, the Shakuntlā and many other classical texts swept the whole West off their feet. They discovered to their amazement that India is not empty of religiosity. The missionaries found in Hinduism a potent competitor to Christianity.

The deep spiritual image of India repeatedly came to be appreciated and perpetuated. Goethe’s poetic tribute to the Shakuntalā after he read its German translation gives the flavour of the romantic enthusiasm it aroused :

Wouldst thou the young year’s blossoms
and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed,
enraptured, feasted fed,
Wouldst thou the earth and Heaven itself
in one soul name combine?

I name thee O Sakontala and all at once is said.¹⁹

Schopenhauer commenting on the Upanishads in his book *The World Considered as Will and Idea*, says, “That incomparable

17. Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism* (Delhi : Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1967), p. 78.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

19. Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (London : Pall Mall Press, 1972), p. 24.

book stirs the spirit to the very depths of the soul. From every sentence deep, original, and sublime, thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us and original thoughts of kindred spirits. And oh, now thoroughly is the mind here washed clean of all early engrafted Jewish superstitions, and of all philosophy that cringes before these superstitions ! In the whole world there is no study, except that of originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Oupnekbat*. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."²⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson paying rich tributes to the classical Indian writings says in his Journal, "The rapture of the prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian scriptures—in the Vedas, the Bhagavadgītā and the Vishnu Purāṇa."²¹ Western writers' sympathetic attitude reaches at its climax with Walt Whitman's poem, entitled 'Passage to India', written in 1868 :

Passage O Soul to India,
 Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables,
 Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,
 The old, most populous, wealthies of earth's lands.
 The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many
 affluents,
 (I my shores of America walking to-day behold resuming all)
 The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,
 On one side China, on the other side Persia and Arabia,
 To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,
 The following literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,
 Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and junior
 Buddha,
 The foot of man unstayed, the hands never at rest,
 Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.²²

The above-mentioned ideas clearly show that India's deep spirituality and classical heritage was acknowledged by the great poets, writers, philosophers in the west itself. But beyond this romantic poetry and philosophy, a more systematic study

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

21. Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism* (Delhi : Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1967), p. 86.

22. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York : Modern Library Publication, 1950), pp. 321-25.

of Indian themes and institutions led to the establishment of a lasting academic discipline called Orientalism.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF ORIENTALISM

Information and material on Oriental life and thought was already gathering in the individual as well as public libraries of the West. Now chairs and research projects were initiated in the universities and conferences were held to carry on research on Oriental themes in the West. The growing interest in the Oriental languages such as Arabic, Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, etc. led to a cluster of new branches of scholarship-comparative philology, comparative mythology, comparative religion and folklore, comparative law and anthropology, etc. Systematic studies of Indian themes were going on for quite some time but the founding of Asiatic Society of Bengal by William Jones in 1784, helped to coordinate the efforts of individual scholars and the publication of the *Asiatick Researchers* helped to make their findings known all over Europe.²³

The term Oriental or Orientalism is based on the geographical distinction between the Orient and Occident. It refers to the discipline of study pertaining to the East. The term 'Orientalist' occurred in England towards 1779, and in France in 1799. 'Orientalism' finds a place in the *Dictionnaire del Academie Francaise* of 1838. The idea of a special discipline devoted to the study of the East was gathering support.²⁴ It is not only the geographical distinction to which the idea of Orient or Orientalism refers but it also implies the relative strength, skill and position of the West in relation to the East. Orientalism is primarily a Western enterprise to interpret and understand the East and it makes the whole difference. The West interpreted the East in their own terms being guided consciously or unconsciously by the whole series of their interests in the East. This fact is now being universally recognised. P.J. Marshall

23. P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge : University Press, 1970), p. 14 (Introduction).

24. Maxime Rodinson, 'The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam' in *The Legacy of Islam* (eds. Joseph Schacht with C.E. Bosworth) (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1974) (Second).

introducing the eighteenth century British writings on Hinduism, says, "The pieces that follow will show the limitations of their authors only too clearly. With the possible exception of Jone they do not try to understand what Hinduism meant to millions of Indians. They invariably made a distinction between 'popular' Hinduism, which they did not deem worthy of study, and 'philosophical' Hinduism, which they tried to define as a set of hard and fast doctrinal propositions and to place in current theories about the nature and history of religion. All of them wrote with contemporary European controversies and their own religious preoccupations very much in mind. As Europeans have always tended to do, they created Hinduism in their own image."²⁵ Allen J. Greenberger concluding his study, *The British Image of India*, based on the literature of Imperialism between 1880-1960, writes, "Despite the difference in tone, as much as in theme, which marked these different periods, there are certain similarities which are common to all of them. All approached India from the point of view of Britain. If the image of India is derived from any one point it is the British view of their own civilization."²⁶ Philip D. Curtin in his study, *The Image of Africa : British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, has also arrived at the same conclusion : "Perhaps the most striking aspect of the British Image of Africa...was its variance from the African reality.... They did not ask, 'What is Africa like, and what manner of men live there' but, 'How does Africa, and how do the Africans, fit into what we already know about the world'. In this sense, the image of Africa was far more European than African.... The image of Africa in short, was largely created in Europe to suit European needs—sometimes material needs, more often intellectual needs."²⁷ Norman Daniel discussing the formation of the Western Image of Islam states, "Men seem to take it for granted that an alien society is dangerous, if not hostile, and the spasmodic outbreak of warfare between Islam and Christendom throughout their history has been one

25. P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge : University Press, 1970), p. 43.

26. Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India* (A Study in the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960) (London : Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 203.

27. Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa : British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*. (London : Macmillan & Company, 1965), pp. 479-80.

manifestation of this. Apparently, under the pressure of their sense of danger, whether real or imagined, a deformed image of their enemy's beliefs takes shape in men's minds. By misapprehension and misrepresentation an idea of the beliefs and practices of one society can pass into the accepted myths of another society in a form so distorted that its relation to the original facts is sometimes barely discernible. Doctrines that are the expression of the spiritual outlook of an enemy are interpreted ungenerously and with prejudice, and even facts are modified—as in good faith—to suit the interpretation. In this way is constituted a body of belief about what another group of people believes. A 'real truth' is identified; this is something that contrasts with what the enemy say they believe; they must not be allowed to speak for themselves. This doctrine about doctrine is widely repeated, and confirmed by repetition in slightly varying forms.²⁸

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is one of the most acclaimed treatise on the subject. Analysing the structure of Orientalism he has made a very forceful, persuasive and passionate case in defence of the integrity of the Orient. The implications of the factor of 'power' in the structure of Orientalism has been elucidated at great length. Some of his findings regarding the structure of Orientalism are worth mentioning in this context. "The Orient", says Edward Said, "was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."²⁹ Orientalism as the author sees it, is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (Or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part

28. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West : The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh : at the University Press, 1966), p. 2.

29. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1978), p. 1.

of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.”³⁰ Having thus locating Orient and Orientalism the learned author goes on to elucidate its meaning : “The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist and what he or she does is Orientalism.”³¹ “Orientalism”, he maintains further, “is a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”. Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between the East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “Mind”, destiny, and so on.”³²

Thirdly, taking the late eighteenth century as the starting point he says, “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient....In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity “the Orient is in question.”³³ The author continues, “To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak

30. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 1-2.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands" in Oriental professorate, a complex array of "Oriental" ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use—the list can be extended more or less indefinitely".³⁴ Emphasizing the role of power factor in the structure of Orientalism he explains, "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K.M. Panikkar's classic *Asia and Western Dominance*. The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered common-place by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be—that is submitted to being—made Oriental." Edward Said goes on to illustrate this point, "There is very little consent to be found...in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental"....Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled."³⁵ Emphasizing that the Orientalism is more an European creation than a reality he says, "Orientalism therefore, is not airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of

34. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 4.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made “truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into general culture.”³⁶ In addition to the factor of power, it was European cultural hegemony which sustained Orientalism as an European idea and institution. The author maintains, “It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength.....Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying “us” European as against all “those” non-Europeans and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made the culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe : the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter...Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”³⁷ As a result of these whole series of factors, the author elucidates, “Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. Additionally, the imaginative examination of the things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Orient

36. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was Oriental, than according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections."³⁸

Edward Said in his classic study on Orientalism has elaborated and analysed all the above cited generalizations in great detail and depth, in a very persuasive and conclusive style but for our present purpose to elucidate and understand the Western perspective on India and Sikhism—the awareness of these general facts would provide enough clues concerning the forces at work in Orientalizing the Orient and the formation of the image of India and the Sikhism through these studies. So far as the individual writers working on the Oriental themes are concerned they seem to be the individual instances of the above general discipline of Orientalism, in larger or smaller degrees. However, individual's particular observations should also find a respectable place in perspective studies.

PROBLEMS OF UNDERSTANDING THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS BY THE CHRISTIANS

One important factor which has already been referred to, should be re-emphasized in this context, viz. the Westerners' notion of the superiority and finality of the Christian doctrine and faith. The notion of the Christian West is all the more important where the study and understanding of the non-Christian and non-Western religions by the Western scholars are concerned. In addition to this Christian bias against the non-Christian religions, Ernst Benz³⁹ has related some other genuine problems which a Christian scholar faces while attempting to understand the non-Christian religions.

The first and the basic problem confronting a Christian scholar to understand the non-Christian religion is that of language. It is very difficult to translate the technical theological terms of non-Christian religions into Christian terms. The

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

39. Ernst Benz, 'On Understanding Non-Christian Religions' in *The History of Religion* (edited by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), (seventh edition, 1974), pp. 115-131.

religious experience is far more difficult to convey through a foreign language.⁴⁰ Differences in historical, philosophical and theological assumptions are other problems that a Christian scholar faces while studying the non-Christian religions. Emphasizing this difficulty Ernst Benz writes, "As I come to understand the essence of the non-Christian religions, it became at once increasingly clear to me to what extent and to what degree of depth our Western attitude, our intellectual, emotional and volitional reaction to other religions, is modified by the European Christian heritage....Our scientific-critical thinking, our total experience of life, our emotional and volitional ways of reaction, are strongly shaped by our specific Christian presuppositions and Western ways of thought and life."⁴¹ Benz mentions three points in this connection. Firstly, the Christian thinking is so much deeply qualified in its philosophical and methodological ideas by a personalistic idea of God that it makes almost difficult to understand a religion of Buddhistic fundamental disposition which knows no idea of personal God. Hindu and Shinto polytheism poses another problem for a Christian scholar to appropriate these traditions in his understanding. The third point that Benz makes is that Hinduism, like Buddhism and Shintoism lacks one other distinction so fundamental in Christian thinking. It is the belief in the basic essential difference between the Creation and the Creator.⁴² According to the author preference for theology or doctrinal part of religion is another characteristic of the Christian thinking which sometimes makes it difficult to understand religions where emphasis is more on liturgical and cultic expressions than doctrinal.⁴³ Benz cautions further that the Western Christian also must beware of transferring to the Eastern religions his own ideas concerning the organization of religions. The assumption of Christian ecclesiastical model is not always helpful in analysing other non-Christian religions.⁴⁴

40. Ernst Benz, 'On Understanding Non-Christian Religions' in *The History of Religion* (edited by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), (seventh edition, 1974), p. 117.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-24.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

These and many other characteristic features of the Western Christian thinking always create problems for the proper understanding of the non-Christian religions. These problems are for those scholars who genuinely seek to understand the non-Christian religions. But the factors which we have noticed while discussing the structure of Orientalism and the Western Image of the Orient are of far greater magnitude and of far more profound significance. It was almost impossible for the writers of this period to avoid or overlook those overwhelming influences in their writings. Consciously or unconsciously they were guided in their studies by these powerful influences.

The interaction of the West with India is a historic fact. For some time and at some level the mode of the interaction between these two civilizations, with very different and varied past, was that of dialogue. Both were participants in the dialogue and learnt from each other. But with the British gaining political domination and India slowly being reduced to a colony of the Britishers, the dialogue started assuming the form of a discourse. There could not be a meaningful dialogue between the master and the slave. India's position was far more inferior in the dialogue with the West. Britishers' relatively superior position in India was making its presence felt in all spheres of activity including West's understanding of Indian life and thought. Thus dialogue and discourse, both the modes of interaction have contributed to the formation of the Western perspective on India. The West tried to interpret and understand India but this interpretation and understanding, most of the time and in a large number of instances, was in their own European, Western, Imperial and Christian terms.

RELIGION AS THE CENTRAL CONCERN IN THE WESTERN WRITINGS

In the Western writings on India religion remained a special subject of attraction. Social, legal and political institutions of India were based on the world-view which in essence was religious. Religion in every form and variety was a very powerful and pervasive phenomenon in Indian life and thought. This fact about India in the West was realized at a very early stage of their encounter.

In order to know the indigenous social and political institutions they had to study the Indian religions. In the early stages the study of Indian religions was taken up as a preparation for their imperial designs and it continued to perpetuate their imperial hold on India. P.J. Marshall elaborating the European interest in Indian religions says, "In the second half of the eighteenth century the triumph of British arms in India gave Europeans new opportunities for studying Indian civilization. It is hardly surprising that many of those who took advantage of these new opportunities should have been British or that Indian religion should have been the main object of their inquiries. Religion was still the major preoccupation of the intellectual life of the eighteenth century Europe, even for those who rejected its formal claims, and religion seemed to be the key for understanding all things Indian."⁴⁵

MISSIONARY INTERESTS OF THE BRITISHERS

Having got themselves politically established, the Britishers in India developed their missionary interests too. The Christian missionaries of various denominations were active in India for quite some time. But with the inclusion of missionary clause in the Charter Act of the East India Company, in 1813,⁴⁶ the activities of missionaries with state patronage increased manifold. Missionaries from all European countries and America established their own centres in all parts of the country. This new and powerful challenge provided great impetus to Indian religions to revive and reform and gave rise to a great number of religious reform movements among all forms of traditional religions of India.

Religion primarily implies the total involvement of the total personality. The participant involves himself in his religion in and through its religious rituals, ceremonies, symbols, institutions, beliefs, etc. It is through the personal involvement that the religious forms, institutions and belief-systems become meaningful. This involvement, and the personal quality of faith

45. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, p. vii (Preface).

46. Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, p. 83.

always eludes understanding by an outsider, non-participant or foreigner. The Western perspective on Indian religions was that of outsider's or foreigner's perspective. This was another inherent limitation of their understanding of Indian religions in addition to many other limitations, reasons, implied in the above discussion.

In the above discussion we have attempted to elaborate the Western perspective on India by discussing what interaction among different nations and civilizations means. How do they interact with one another? What modes and forms this interaction assumes? What role the motives and designs of the interacting parties play in the encounter? How does the 'power' factor affect in this dialogue? To what extent the outside and foreign is accessible to understanding? How do the changing historical and personal relations affect the growth of each other's understanding and image? These were the general observations concerning the nature of Western perspective on the Orient. Now in this chapter we propose to return to the study of a more particular and concrete area—the Western understanding and image of Sikhism, especially the Sikh tradition. But before that, one more important factor in this context needs a little further elaboration.

CHALLENGE AND ROLE OF THE MISSIONARIES IN THE PUNJAB

The earlier encounter of the Sikhs with the Europeans was through the agencies of adventurers, travellers, civil and military officials of the East India Company and a few Orientalists. The last and most affective to join them were the Christian missionaries. The diversity of the fields from which these people came shows the enormity, vitality and variety of levels at which the interaction and dialogue was going on. The guiding motives of these agents of communication were far from implicit. Of the first three categories, we have already given a brief account including their activities and a survey of their writings related to our field. A brief notice of the advent and activities of the Christian missionaries would be quite relevant here, as they constitute the single most powerful determining factor, so far as the Westerners' attitude towards Indian religions is concerned.

The historical connection of the Christian missionaries with the Punjab goes back to A.D. 1595. As early as in 1597, the Jesuits had established a small Church in Lahore.⁴⁷ Bhai Gurdas perhaps is the first Sikh writer to refer to the Jews and the Christians in his writings.⁴⁸ But these are just earlier references, without having any significant historical implications. The real and meaningful encounter of the Christian missionaries with the Sikhs begins in the beginning of the nineteenth century. William Carey, a missionary scholar of Serampore and Professor of the 'Sungskrit', 'Bengalee' and 'Mahratta' languages in the College of Fort William, had prepared a Grammar of the 'Punjabee' Language as early as A.D. 1812.⁴⁹ In the preface of the Grammar he writes, "The Sikhs follow the religion founded by Nanuka, the precepts of which are contained in a large volume, called emphatically, the Grantha, or the writing which is written in a particular character called Gooroo-Mukhee Nagurea; on which account they have a peculiar veneration for that character, and, with few exceptions, use it in all their transactions. That character is, therefore, used in the following work, as that which properly belongs to the language."⁵⁰ By the year 1819, William Carey had translated the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament into Gurmukhi Punjabi.⁵¹ Rev. William Ward Manager of the Serampore press also has given the account of the Sikhs, on the basis of John Malcolm and with the help of a learned Sikh employed in the Serampore printing office, in his book, *The Hindoos* (History, Literature and Religion).⁵² What inspired these missionaries, residing at such a long distance from the land of Punjab to focus their attention on Punjabi language and to translate the Bible into Punjabi? Of course, the basic motive was to preach the Gospel but it

47. E.R. Hambye, S. J. 'A Contemporary Jesuit Document on Guru Arjun Dev's Martyrdom' in *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*, p. 114.

48. *Vārān Bbāi Gurdās* (Punjabi) (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1981), pp. 88, 409 (8/16/38/11).

49. W. Carey, D.D. *Grammar of the Punjabee Language* (Serampore : The Mission Press, 1812).

50. *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 2.

51. Rev. C.H. Loehlin, 'The History of Christianity in the Punjab', in *The Singh Sabha and other Socio-Religious Movements in the Punjab 1850-1925*, (ed. by Ganda Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1984), p. 204.

52. Ward, *The Hindoos* (History, Literature and Religion), pp. 324-354.

seems quite probable that they were attracted to the land of the Punjab because it was a progressive state, the people were stout, brave and more open-minded and their movements were practising theistic religion. The members of the Sikh community were present in Bengal and their account was already available in the writings of Charles Wilkins, John Malcolm, James Browne and George Forster.

After the inclusion of the missionary clause in the Company's Charter in 1813, the empire was opened to missionaries. Missionaries of all hues and varieties from all the Western countries came to India to establish their Churches. The first regular mission in the Punjab was opened in 1834, at Ludhiana. It was founded by John Lowrie of the American Presbyterian Mission, the first Protestant Mission in the Province.⁵³ John Newton giving the reasons for the selection of the Punjab for opening their mission writes, "After much consideration they chose the Punjab. No other section of India is so full of historic interest as this. It was from here that Hindooism spread over the whole Peninsula. It was here that the great battle was fought which is described in the *Mahābhārat*. It was through the Punjab that every successful invasion of India has taken place, except the British. It was here that the tide of Alexander's victories terminated.

"But such considerations had little influence on the first Missionaries in the selection of their field of labour. This seems to have been due mainly to the fact that this was the land of the Sikhs—a people of fine physique, unusually independent character, a people, more-over, who had already in principle at least, discarded the old idolatry of Hinduism, and broken, in some measure, the bonds of caste; and, therefore, might be considered to be in favourable state to be influenced by the preaching of Christian Missionaries."⁵⁴ Regarding the Medical Mission at Amritsar, Donald McLeod wrote to Anglican Mission Committee in 1872, as follows : "Next to Delhi, Umritsar is the most populous, the most convenient, and the most busy and prosperous city in the Punjab. It is at the same time the acknowledged chief centre of Sikhism, and thus the headquarters

53. Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, p. 39.

54. John Newton, *History of American Protestant Missions in India* as quoted by C.H. Loehlin, *The History of Christianity in the Punjab*, p. 208.

of what I believe to be the most interesting, most accessible and least bigoted race in the Punjab, as well as the most vigorous and manly."⁵⁵

In 1835, Maharaja Ranjit Singh having learnt about the Christian Missionary School and Centre at Ludhiana invited Lowrie to Lahore and asked him to open a school in Lahore to impart English education to young princes and nobles. Lowrie could not accept the invitation on health grounds. On this occasion Lowrie presented a copy of the English Bible and also a copy of the Old Testament in the Punjabi language and in Gurmukhi character, published by the Serampore missionaries.⁵⁶

It seems, the missionaries did not have the freedom to preach in the territories of the Khālsā Rāj. An Indian Christian preacher named Goloknath was sent from Ludhiana to Phillaur. This first apostle to Sikhs stopped near the fort and began to preach the Gospel. He was at once arrested and thrown on his back and a millstone placed on his chest. He was later allowed to go back with a warning not to return.⁵⁷ After the annexation of the Punjab to the British Empire, the missionary centres of various church denominations were set up in all the important cities and towns.⁵⁸

In 1860, the Sikh Raja of Kapurthala invited the Ludhiana mission to set up a centre. He built a house for them and also a Church at the expenses of thousands of rupees. Rev. Woodside was looking after this centre. Later on, Raja's nephew Prince Harnam Singh became a Christian.⁵⁹ Regarding the liberal attitude of the Raja, the annual report of the Ludhiana Mission recorded, "Until the Rajah of Kapurthala invited missionaries to his capital, no instance had occurred in India, in which the progress of the gospel had been fostered by a ruler."⁶⁰ C.H. Loehlin quoting the C.M.S. Mission History mentions the

55. As quoted by Loehlin, *Ibid.*, p. 210.

56. As quoted by Loehlin, *Ibid.*, p. 211.

57. Wherry, 'Our Missions in India 1834-1924' as quoted by Loehlin, *Ibid.*, p. 212.

58. For a list of the spread of the mission centres and the denominations active in Punjab, See C.H. Loehlin, *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.

59. Loehlin, *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.

60. "Annual Report of the Lodiana Missions, 1862" as quoted by Prof. Harbans Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh* (Delhi : Sahitya Academi, 1984), p. 22.

following persons as the Christian heroes of the Punjab : Sir Henry Lawrence, Lord (John) Lawrence, Sir Robert Montgomery, Sir Donald McLeod, Sir Herbert Edwards, Mr. Arthur Roberts, Mr. Edwards Thornton, Gen. Edward Lake, Gen. Reynell Taylor and others.⁶¹ Kirpal Chandra Yadav quoting Clark, Secretary to the Christian Missionary Society for Punjab, informs us, "That time was one when there were many great Christian heroes in the Punjab. Sir Henry Lawrence was then at the head of the Board of Administration. His letter of welcome to the missionaries and subscription of Rs. 500 a year to the mission showed the importance that he attached to the work which they were commencing."⁶² Under the patronage of the government, direct attempts were made at converting the Sikhs. Systematic attempts were made to weaken and destroy the Sikh religious institutions. Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler of the Punjab, who had come under the British tutelage at the age of eight, accepted the Christian faith in 1853.⁶³ Maharaja was converted to Christianity in the hope that many more Sikhs would follow his example.⁶⁴ "The Gospel", says Harbans Singh, "was preached in the neighbourhood of the Golden Temple. For this purpose one of the surrounding *bungās* or pilgrims' inns, had been acquired on rent."⁶⁵ In July 1852, Daud Singh, a Sikh attendant of a Gurdwara of nearby village, was converted to Christianity and his conversion ceremony was performed openly in the vicinity of the Darbar Sahib.⁶⁶ The *Guru Granth Sahib* was openly denounced as the heathen scripture.⁶⁷ An anonymous high British official through the *Calcutta Review*, 1859 (p. 17) went to the extent of suggesting the neglect and destruction of the Golden Temple saying, "Leave it (Golden Temple) to itself and withdraw from it the patronage of the state, resume the lands set aside for it...and the splendour of the institution will pass away. The gilded dome will lose its

61. Loehlin, *The History of Christianity in the Punjab*, p. 210.

62. Kirpal Chandra Yadav, 'British Policy Towards Sikhs, 1849-57 in *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*, p. 202 (Footnote No. 110).

63. Harbans Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh*, p. 22.

64. Kirpal Chandra Yadav, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

65. Harbans Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

66. Kirpal Chandra Yadav, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

67. *Ibid.*

lusture, the marble walls fall out of its despair..To act thus would be to act impartially and in accordance with the true principle of non-interference."⁶⁸ The pro-Christian policy of the state succeeded to the expectations of the missionaries. *The Administration Report* (1849-51) records, "The Sikh faith and ecclesiastical policy is rapidly going where the Sikh political ascendancy has already gone....These men joined (Sikhism) in thousands and they now desert in equal numbers....The sacred tank at Amritsar is less thronged than formerly, and the attendance at annual festivals is diminishing yearly."⁶⁹

The contribution of the Christian missionaries in the interaction of two civilizations of the West and the East was thus more vigorous and challenging, but indirect. The missionaries did not take to writing commentaries on the Indian scriptures and themes to recommend or refute them as the list of the Punjabi publications published in their press suggests.⁷⁰ They contributed more through their actions than through their ideas. Their proselytizing activities were a great challenge to the authority and authenticity of the indigenous religious traditions. Their dedication to their job, new methods of social work, printing technology, medical missions, new methods of education offered so vigorous and forceful challenge to the indigenous Indian religious institutions which was unheard of before that. It provided a very strong impetus for reform and reinterpretation—reform in the religious practices and religious organisations and reinterpretation of the belief systems, philosophies in the light of the new challenges. It gave rise to a number of religious reform movements among all religious groups. Sikhism did not remain unaffected by this new powerful challenge.

68. Kirpal Chandra Yadav, 'British Policy Towards Sikhs, 1849-57 in *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*, p. 202.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

70. Gurcharan Singh Arshi in his book *Punjabī Bhāshā Te Sābit Nū Isāi Missionariān Dī Dain*, published by the Punjab Languages Department, Patiala in 1975; has given a long list of their publications which are mostly translations of the scriptural passages and propaganda literature for the propagation of the Gospel. The list of the publication in the book is from page 36 to 39.

WESTERN WRITERS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE SIKH RELIGION

Almost all the Western writers on Sikhism sought to solve the question of the nature of Sikhism by solving the question of its origin. What is Sikhism was sought to be explained by explaining, how it originated? The question of the origin of Sikhism has been discussed by all the Western writers on Sikhism. The importance to this aspect of Sikhism was attached because of the place of history in the Westerners' world-view and because of the influence of the evolutionary and rational theories of human life on their attitude. A whole series of other questions related to the origin of Sikhism were also raised. For example, they attempted to explore how Sikhism is related to the earlier religious traditions of Hinduism and Islam? Is it a reform movement, a sect or a distinct religion? Who is the founder of Sikhism and what is his authority? How has this tradition evolved and developed and where can Sikhism be placed in the general history of the world religions? etc. In this context we propose to study the answers to these questions as elaborated by the western writers on Sikhism. It goes without saying that they attempted to solve these questions on the bases of their personal observations, information supplied to them by the persons pretending to have knowledge of the Sikh tradition and faith and the Sikh scriptures and writings, where access to these sources was possible. It is also pertinent to mention here that the number of the Western writers who have made original contribution in the field of Sikh studies in the form of collecting authentic information and providing interpretation is not large. Most of these writings are mostly based on the secondary sources having nothing new to offer, either in the form of information or by way of interpretation. In the present study, we shall pay more attention to those writers who have made some original contribution in the field. Those basing their accounts on earlier available information and interpretations in English should not hold our attention for long. The writings under discussion here are spread over a period of two centuries. The information in the earlier ones is very thin and scanty, based mostly on casual observations and the secondary sources. These sketchy accounts contain innumerable factual mistakes.

The later accounts in comparison with the earlier ones are more detailed, cogent and accurate. Our main concern in the present endeavour will not be to offer correct accounts in place of the incorrect ones but to explore their perspective on more fundamental themes of the Sikh Religion.

FOUNDER OF THE SIKH RELIGION

There is no controversy with respect to the founder of the faith among the Western writers. Almost all the writers have conceded to the fact that Baba Guru Nanak was the initiator of the 'tribe', 'sect', 'race', 'people', 'nation', 'faith' 'religion of the Sikhs'. "The Siques", says Polier, "date the origin of their sect as far back as the reign of Ackbar (should be Lodhis), at which time lived in the environs of Lahore a reputed saint named Gorou Nanak (in their language, *gorou* signified master or leader, and *Sique* a disciple). This man had many followers, who embraced his doctrine, and acknowledged him as the head of a new sect..."⁷¹ Browne while referring to the origin of the Sikhs writes, "The people known by the name of the Sicks, were originally the common inhabitants of the provinces of Lahore and Multan and mostly of the *Jaut* tribe; the doctrine on which their sect is founded was introduced by *Gooroo Nanak*..."⁷² Wilkins writing about the founder of the Sikh Religion states, "That the founder of their faith was called *Naneek Sah*, who flourished about four (should be three) hundred years ago at Punjab, and who before his apostasy, was a Hindoo of the kshatry or military tribe...."⁷³ Forster in his letter expressing his inability to supply full information about the Sikhs writes, "My knowledge of the subject does not permit me to deduce, on substantial authority, their history from the period in which Nanock their first institutor and law-giver lived, or mark with an order of dates the progress which this people have made, and the varying gradations of their power, until their attainment of their present state of national importance."⁷⁴ He further

71. A.L.H. Polier, 'The Siques', *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 55.

72. James Browne, 'History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs', *India Tracts*, p. 13.

73. Charles Wilkins, 'The Seeks and their College at Patna', *Asiatic Researches*, p. 73.

74. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 291.

describes, "Nanock", as "the founder of the Sicque nation...."⁷⁵ Trumpp, whose position on this point otherwise is very vague and negative⁷⁶ also refers to Guru Nanak as "the founder of the religious system of the Sikhs...."⁷⁷ Thus on the question of the founder of Sikhism there is unanimity of opinion among all the Western scholars and they have faithfully followed the line of the earlier writers.

RELATION OF THE SIKH RELIGION TO ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On the question, how Sikh Religion is related to its background, there is divergence of views among the Western writers from the very beginning of these studies. In the opinion of Polier, "The sect of the Siques has a strong taint of Gentoo (corrupt form of Hindu) religion."⁷⁸ Browne emphasizing the reformatory character of Sikhism says, "The doctrine on which their sect is founded was introduced by *Gooroo Nanak*, about two hundred and fifty years ago and appears to bear that kind of relation to the Hindoo religion, which the Protestant does to the Romish, retaining all the essential principles, but being abridged of most of its ceremonies, as well as of the subordinate objects of veneration."⁷⁹ Wilkins in his observations does not enter into this question but in his prefatory letter to these observations to the Secretary of the Asiatic Society, says that the Sikhs are a sect of the people distinguished from the worshippers of *Brahm* and the followers of Mahommed.⁸⁰ Forster was very much appreciative of Guru Nanak's creative genius. He says, "Nanock appears to have possessed qualities happily adapted to affect the institution of a new system of religion."⁸¹ However, he was fully aware of the common ground between the Hindus

75. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 292.

76. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. XCVII.

77. *Ibid.*, p. I (Introduction).

78. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (Ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 63.

79. Browne, 'History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs', *India Tracts*, pp. 13-14.

80. Charles Wilkins, Author's Prefatory letter, 'The Seekers and their College at Patna', *Asiatic Researches*, p. 71.

81. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, p. 293.

and the Sikhs. Commenting on the relation of Sikhism to Hinduism he writes, "Though many essential differences exist between the religious code of the Hindoos and that of the Sicques, a large space of their ground-work exhibits strong features of similarity. The article indeed of the admission of proselytes amongst the Sicques, has caused an essential deviation from the Hindoo system, and apparently levelled those barriers which were constructed by Brahma, for the arrangement of the different ranks and professions of his people. Yet this indiscriminate admission, by the qualifications which have been adopted do not widely infringe on the customs and prejudices of those Hindoos who have embraced the faith of the Sicques. They still preserve the distinctions which originally marked their sects, and perform many of the ancient ceremonies of their nation. They form matrimonial connexions only in their own tribes, and adhere implicitly to the rules prescribed by the Hindoo law, in the choice and preparation of their food. The only aliment used in common, by the Sicques at this day is the *pursaud*, or the sacred bread, from the participation of which no tribe or class of their people is excluded."⁸² Malcolm maintains that Guru Nanak's effort was to affect a reconciliation between the conflicting traditions of the Hindus and the Muslims. Elaborating the point he says, "Nanac professed a desire to reform, not to destroy, the religion of the tribe in which he was born; and actuated by the great and benevolent design of reconciling the jarring faiths of Brahma and Muhammed, he endeavoured to conciliate both Hindus and Moslems to his doctrine, by persuading them to reject those parts of their respective beliefs and usages, which he contended, were unworthy of that God whom they both adored. He called upon the Hindus to abandon the worship of the idols and return to that pure devotion of the Diety, in which their religion originated. He called upon the Muhammedans to abstain from practices, like the slaughter of cows, that were offensive to the religion of the Hindus, and to cease from the persecution of that race. He adopted, in order to conciliate them, many of the maxims which he had learnt from mendicants, who preofessed the principles of the Sufi sect; and he constantly referred to the admired writings of the

82. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, pp. 294-95.

celebrated Muhammadan Kabir, who was a professed Sufi, and who inculcated the doctrine of the equality of the relation of all the created beings to their Creator. Nanac endeavoured with all the power of his own genius, aided by such authorities to impress both Hindus and Muhammedans with a love of toleration and an abhorrence of war; and his life was as peaceable as his doctrine."⁸³

William Francklin a noted Orientalist, emphasizing the Islamic influence on Guru Nanak's teachings writes, "In the reign of the Emperor Babur, Nanick Shah, founder of the tribe, was born at a small village named Tulbindee, in the province of Lahore; at an early period of his life, this extraordinary person, who possessed a good capacity and amiable manners, forsook the world, and devoted himself to a life of religious austerity. In this recluse state, aided by the effusions of a fervid imagination, Nanick framed a system of religion, composed from the speculative and contemplative theories of Mussulman divinity, which he delivered to his numerous followers as of divine origin."⁸⁴ Cunningham with whose labours the Western studies of Sikhism have come of age and attained high academic standard, was fully aware of the importance of the issue of Sikhism's relation with its historical back-ground, states the aim of his efforts as follows : "The author's principal object in writing this history has not always been understood, and he therefore thinks it right to say that his main endeavour was to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity, by showing the connection with the different creeds of India, by exhibiting it as a natural and important result of the Muhammadan conquest...."⁸⁵ Cunningham is of the view that Guru Nanak's efforts were the continuity of the efforts of the earlier religious reformers of India, but his views compared with the others were more comprehensive and profound. Elaborating his views from the historical perspective on this issue he maintains, "Thus, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Hindu mind was no longer stagnant or retrogressive; it had been leavened with Muhammadanism, and changed and quickened for a new

83. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 116-18.

84. William Francklin, 'The Sikhs and their Country', *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp: 79-80.

85. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XX (Author's preface to the second edition).

development. Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality, and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kabir had denounced images, and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vallabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these good and able men appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life, that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition to be unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at emancipation from priestcraft, or from the grossness of idolatory and polytheism. They formed pious associations of contented Quietists, or they gave themselves up to the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss, rather than called upon their fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel, and to arise a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their sects remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in the religious hopes."⁸⁶

Trumpp a noted Orientalist, and the first Government sponsored translator of the scriptures of the Sikhs was the most prejudiced and biased of all the Western writers of Sikhism. He disregarded the findings of Forster, Malcolm Cunningham, and followed Wilson's, the most inadequate and false estimation of the nature of Sikhism, Wilson seems to hold the Sikhs and the Sikh faith responsible for his own ignorance of the subject. In one of his articles he writes, "This exposition of the Sikh faith, if anything so vague deserves the appellation of a faith, is known as the *Ādi Granth*, the 'First Book' to distinguish it from another scriptural authority of the Sikhs of a later date. It is a large volume but contains no systematic exposition of doctrines—no condensed creed—no rules for ritual observances. It is an unconnected compilation of the verses of a mystical or a moral purport, ascribed mostly to Nanak, except a

86. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 34.

general accordance in a sort of spiritual quietism and the acknowledgement of one divine cause and essence of all the things."⁸⁷ At another place, crediting the Udasis as the genuine disciples of Guru Nanak, he says, "Many of the Udasis are well read in Sanskrit, and are expounders of the Vedanta philosophy on which the tenets of Nanak are mainly founded."⁸⁸ Trumpp introducing his 'Sketch of the Religion of the Sikhs', writes, "The religious system of the Sikhs has been touched already by different writers, but in such general terms, that but little can be gathered from them. Even H.H. Wilson, in his "Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus", has very cautiously handled this matter, and contended himself with offering a few short though pertinent remarks about it."⁸⁹ Sharing the results of his own independent research, Trumpp maintains, "Nanak himself was not a speculative philosopher, who built up a concise system on scientific principles; he had not received a regular school-training, and uttered therefore his thoughts in a loose way, which are now scattered through the Granth and must first be patiently searched out and collected into a whole, before we can form an idea of his tenets.

"Nanak himself was by no means an independent thinker, neither had he any idea of starting a new religious sect; he followed in all essential points the common Hindu philosophy of those days and especially his predecessor Kabir, who was at that time already a popular man in India, and whose writings, which were composed in the vulgar tongue, were accessible to the unlearned masses."⁹⁰ Trumpp further contends, "It is a mistake, if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and Muhammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu, according to all his views, and if he had communionship with Musalmans and many of these even became his disciples, it was owing to the fact that Sufism, which all these Muhammadans were professing, was in reality nothing but a Pantheism, derived directly from Hindu sources, and only outwardly adapted to the forms of the Islam."⁹¹

87. Wilson, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, pp. 55-56.

88. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus* (edited by Ernest R. Rost), pp. 149-50.

89. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. XCVII (Introduction).

90. *Ibid.*, p. XCVII.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. CI-CII.

Pincott, a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, took to refute the position held by Trumpp. He made a detailed and documented study of Guru Nanak's connection and closeness to Islam. Questioning the above cited view of Trumpp, he argues, "If the foregoing opinion accurately represents the real truth, then Sikhism hardly deserves mention in the present work (*A Dictionary of Islam*); but it will soon be seen that the balance of evidence is heavily on the other side. A careful investigation of early Sikh traditions, points strongly to the conclusion that the religion of Nanak was really intended as compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism, if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a Muhammadan sect."⁹² Basing his views on the Sikh scriptures and early Sikh traditions he has conclusively shown that the connections of Guru Nanak with Islam cannot be disregarded as accidental. In the same article he has also drawn our attention to the contribution of the Buddhist ideas in the formation of Guru Nanak's thought.⁹³ Describing the religious situation in the Punjab before the advent of Sikhism Pincott writes, "Notwithstanding the Muhammadan domination, these waves of Hindu thought found their way into the Punjab, and helped to adulterate and confuse the lingering Buddhism, the reviving Hinduism and the advancing Muhammadanism. The proof that the Punjab participated in the mental struggle is found in the appearance of Gorakhnath and his sect in the thirteenth century. That still famous teacher and learned enthusiast was a yogin, the sect of Hindus most in harmony with Buddhistic feelings; and his object seems to have been to reconcile decaying Buddhism and reviving Hinduisim."⁹⁴ Regarding the arrival of Guru Nanak on the scene, he maintains, "In 1469 the revered Nanak was born near the town of Lahore; and he came into the world inheriting the traditions which I have endeavoured to sketch, while the struggle between the Hindu and the Muhammadan thought and power was raging. The previous unsettlement in the minds of men had prepared the way for devout and enthusiastic teacher to build up a new and living faith."⁹⁵ He further explains how Sikhism,

92. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *A Dictionary of Islam* (edited by Thomas Patrick Hughes), p. 583.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 590.

94. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 73.

95. *Ibid.*

an attempt to unite Muhammadans, Hindus, Buddhists and Sūfis, became a distinct tradition itself. According to the author, "These two ideas—the unity of God and Brotherhood of Man—while uniting all classes on a common basis, at the same time separated those who accepted them from the rest of their countrymen as an association of God-fearing republicans...."⁹⁶ Being aware of the Sikh tradition of the Divine call of Guru Nanak he fully conceded the originality of the Sikh faith based on the eternal foundations. "At the age of thirty-five" he says, "the great change took place in his (Guru Nanak's) mind which gave to the world a new religion."⁹⁷

Macauliffe in his *magnum opus* has accepted the reformatory character of Sikhism, and thus continuity of the earlier efforts of religious reforms. Dwelling upon the reformatory zeal of the age he writes, "A great cyclic wave of reformation then overspread both continents. During the very period that Luther and Calvin in Europe were warning men of the errors that had crept into Christianity, several Indian saints were denouncing priest-craft, hypocrisy, and idolatry and with very considerable success. Several of these great men who led the crusade against superstition, founded sects, which still survive; but the most numerous and powerful of all is the great Sikh sect founded by Guru Nanak...."⁹⁸ While describing his scheme of presentation, he again refers to the relationship of Sikhism to the movement of reformation. He explains, "This being essentially a work on the Sikh religion we have commenced with Guru Nanak; but if the reader desires to follow the historical development of the Sikh reformation, he had better begin with the sixth volume. This was probably the intention of Guru Arjan himself, for otherwise he could not have included in his compilation of hymns quite opposed to the principles and tenets of his predecessors."⁹⁹ Sikhism thus perceived, is the climax of the reform movements, preceding it. Dwelling on the theme of Divine intervention at the time of distress and darkness he maintains that the Sikh Gurus fully subscribe to the belief that the Guru comes by God's order to

96. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

98. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. XI (Introduction).

99. *Ibid.*, p. XXXII (Preface).

give abundant instructions to all those who are prepared to receive it. He refers to the following verse of Guru Amar Das to prove his contention :

When the world is in darkness, it heartily prayeth.
The True one attentively listenth and with
His kind disposition grandeth consolation.
He giveth orders to the Cloud and the rain
falleth in torrents.¹⁰⁰

Sikhism, according to Macauliffe, thus was a divinely instituted faith. He further maintains that in addition to its divine origin, Sikhism is an unadulterated and original faith as far as its belief system and religious practices are concerned. He proclaims, "Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formularies and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system."¹⁰¹

Following the footsteps of Macauliffe, Dorothy Field also contends that Sikhism should be accepted as a new world religion. Elaborating her thesis she says, "There is a tendency at present day to reckon the Sikhs as a reformed sect of the Hindus; and this has become a matter for controversy among the Indians themselves. The word Hinduism is undoubtedly capable of a very wide application, but it is questionable whether it should be held to include the Sikhs in view of the fact that the pure teachings of the Gurus assumed a critical attitude towards the three cardinal pillars of Hinduism, the priesthood, the caste system, and the Vedas. A reading of the Granth strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion, rather than as a reformed sect of the Hindus."¹⁰²

The later writers, however, dwelt more and more upon Guru Nanak-Kabir connections and their efforts to affect a

100. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. XLI (Introduction); (*Gurū Granth Sāhib*) Malār, M.I., Vār, Slok M. 3, Pauri 16, p. 1285.

101. *Ibid.*, p. LIV-V (Introduction).

102. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 10.

reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims. Farquhar has gone to the extent of maintaining that Guru Nanak was the disciple of Kabir. "Nanak, the founder of the Sikh sect," he says, "was a disciple of the famous teacher Kabir. Except in two matters, his system is practically identical with that of many other Vaishnava sects. It is a theism, and the main teaching of the founder is highly spiritual in character."¹⁰³

James Bisset Pratt also fails to find any difference between the teachings of Kabir and Guru Nanak. He maintains, "Nanak's teaching was, as I have said, very like that of Kabir. And the differences which exist are apparently to be attributed rather to differences in temperament than to any real divergence in belief."¹⁰⁴

Nicol Macnicol holds that "When one passes from Kabir to Nanak one is not conscious of any change of atmosphere. The main ideas of the two teachers are the same, and both teach principles of inwardness and devotion, and commend the way of quietism and of meditation. They are alike in betraying evident traces of both Hindu and Muhammadan influence, and at the same time they agree in standing apart from these two faiths, criticizing them in the forms in which they see them, and seeking to reconcile them. Both teachers might have said, as Nanak said, 'I am neither Hindu nor Muhammadan, but a worshipper of the *Nirākāra*, or the Formless'. The prominence given to Kabir in Nanak's *Ādi Granth* is evidence enough of the influence that the earlier teacher had upon him. He is said, also, to have come into personal contact with him when he was a youngman of twenty-seven years of age."¹⁰⁵ In another context Macnicol says, "Sikhism belongs in its origin to the context of Indian devotional theism or bhakti and is part of that general upsurge within Hinduism of the devout heart which reached its climax in various parts of Western and Northern India between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries of the Christian era. It derives primarily from Hinduism, but has been powerfully affected by the example and not less by the later hostility of Islam."¹⁰⁶ Carpenter too maintains that Sikhism is the

103. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movement in India*, p. 336.

104. Pratt, *India and Its Faiths*, pp. 243-44.

105. Manicol, *Indian Theism*, pp. 144-45.

106. Manicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, p. 272.

continuity of the Indian reform movements, but also accepts its uniqueness. Explaining the institutionalization of Sikhism he notes, "thus was a sect converted into nationality. The movements initiated by Kabir and Chaitanya never acquired such organization and consistency. The orders which grew up out of their teaching lacked the same definite leadership, the same localisation, the same embodiment in a scripture, the same close bond for mutual defence. More clearly than either of his two predecessors did, Nanak endeavour to fuse and transcend both Hindu and Mohammedan elements in his teaching."¹⁰⁷ All the above mentioned four writers were well versed in the medieval Indian religions. They arrived at these conclusions on the basis of their understanding of the Indian religions. Those elements of Sikhism, which were foreign to the above background, were attributed to the influence of Islam. Their knowledge of the Sikh religion was not based on the primary sources, and they were not familiar with the inner causes of the growth and development of the Sikh faith and tradition.

Archer who devoted a full length study to the theme of reconciliation arrived at a conclusion somewhat at variance from the earlier writers. It was because of his familiarity with the basic sources of Sikh religion and history, and his close association with the members of the Sikh community. He does not disregard earlier interpretations, but explores them further. The conclusion at which he arrives is that, "Their movement which can be accounted for within the compass of the last five centuries, originated actually in an earnest, hopeful effort towards the reconciliation, within India at least, of Hindu and Islamic orders and ideas. Their subsequent development provided them in India with opportunities of association with Christianity also. And all the while their religion and their institutions developed somewhat at variance from initial purposes, and Sikhism became an independent and conspicuous order of its own, with a character worthy of comparison at last with that of Hinduism and Islam, and with Christianity in particular. Although Sikhism may have developed separately out of its very failure to accomplish its initial purpose, the failure may be called to some extent successful. The five centuries of

107. Carpenter, *Thetism in Medieval India*, pp. 484-85.

Sikh history provides many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value—often bearing directly for example, upon the major problems of comparative religions.”¹⁰⁸

Archer further adds, “Our concern is a review of a minimum of materials which may explain Sikhism as a venture in the reconciliation of religions, which issued ultimately in a distinct religious order and a separate political community.”¹⁰⁹ Speaking of Kabir as the forerunner of Guru Nanak he contends, “Kabir himself made some efforts towards the reconciliation of Islam and Hinduism and Nanak may have known about it, but Kabir achieved no great success in this, which is not to say at once that Nanak did! But Kabir, nevertheless, may be considered an excellent example of those who have sought harmony between Moslems and Hindus—may be viewed as a personal embodiment, infact, of the qualities and the culture which in solution might be the very medium of accord. But perhaps the culture of the day which Kabir embodied was too eclectic.”¹¹⁰

Regarding the success of Kabir in this respect he feels, “Kabir may be considered the first conspicuous and widely influential saint of modern India whose teachings represent a reconciliation of the major doctrines of Islam and Hinduism, however, few were the Moslems and the Hindus who were reconciled by them. The house of Islam itself was not inclined to yield to them.”¹¹¹ In spite of this fact, Kabir as Archer sees it, is very close to the Sikh tradition, “Kabir came and went, as the *doha* says, his career spent at the chief center of Hindu pilgrimage and reverence, where his memory might have faded into the dim-light of common Hindu day. It escaped that fate, however, due not altogether but mainly to the fact that Nanak the Sikh, also, came and inaugurated a more virile movement nourished partly by Kabir, which gathered Kabir’s teachings to itself and included them in its own sacred scriptures. The “Kabir portions” of the Sikh Granth Sahib are in themselves sufficient

108. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. v (Preface).

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

111. *Ibid.*

evidence that Sikhism is not only a product of times in general but intimately connected also with Kabir's reformation in particular. There is even the linguistic connection between Kabir and Nanak—they shared something of common vernacular."¹¹²

Comparing the reforms of Guru Nanak with other earlier reforms, Archer maintains that Guru Nanak's reforms were more positive, realistic and constructive and they yielded more practical and lasting results. "But Nanak's accomplishments" opines Archer, "were greater for some reason. Was he more constructive, while the others seemed to be for the most part, dissenters? Kabir was more critical than constructive. He and others seem to have been impressed by life's futilities. Some sought escape from priescraft, and some, alienation from the world of sense and form. Most of them were quietistic Hindus, even though they had felt something of the force and pressure of activistic Islam. They had all yielded to this extent, at least, to the pressure of Islam, namely, that they would escape from polytheism, from idolatory and from caste or else from the earthly realm where these prevailed and subsequently find a realm quite free of them. The very service which some of them preached was usually a means of other worldliness for those who served rather than a program of reconstruction of the worldly order. While Nanak himself was critical of the world and had much to say of life negation, there was something positive and realistic in his life—something which the Punjab, at large could utilize and make permanent in religious and political reconstruction."¹¹³ In addition to these historical conditions there were more deeper causes of the origin of Sikhism. Guru Nanak's mission was in response to the Divine call. Referring to that Divine awakening Archer says, "There came to him in this experience the very sound of the True Name and the consciousness of his commission as the True Name's guru-Nanak, therefore, was henceforth guru of the true religion."¹¹⁴

Last of all, and to a larger extent exhaustive of all, are the writings of McLeod among the 'Western' writers. On the question of the background of Guru Nanak's religion, he has

112. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

his own views. Unlike the earlier general and vague theories he is more specific and coherent. He does not outrightly disregard any of the earlier theories. But it seems that the earlier theories have been reworked in McLeod's study. In the process of identifying and defining the Sant tradition in North India, he claims to have discovered the roots of the religion propounded by Guru Nanak. However, his Sant tradition is as vague, abstract and perplexing as the earlier theories concerning Guru Nanak's religious background. First of all McLeod wants to use the term 'founder' for Guru Nanak by qualifying it. He contends that "to Sikhs of all subsequent generations Guru Nanak is the founder of the Sikh religion. Of his importance there can be no doubt whatsoever, and it must also be acknowledged that in a certain sense he is legitimately described as a founder. The following which gathered around this man was certainly the original nucleus of the Sikh Panth and if we are to follow organizational lines in our movement back through history we shall be able to proceed no further than this nucleus and this man.

"In another sense, however, the term 'founder' is misleading, for it suggests that Guru Nanak originated not merely a group of followers but also a school of thought, or set of teachings. This can be accepted as true only in a highly qualified sense. If we place Guru Nanak within his own historical context, if we compare his teachings with those of other contemporary or earlier religious figures, we shall at once see that he stands firmly within a well-defined tradition. What Guru Nanak offers us is the clearest and most highly articulated expression of the *nirguṇa sampradāya*, the so-called Sant tradition of Northern India."¹¹⁵ He further claims, "There is no strong evidence to suggest that Nanak knew of Kabir, but there can be no doubt that both stand within the same tradition and that they share it with many lesser figures. Although the teachings of Guru Nanak do indeed constitute a synthesis, it is not that synthesis of 'Hinduism and Islam' which finds mention in most surveys of his thought. It is the Sant synthesis, a system which he inherited, reworked according to his own genius, and passed on in a form unequalled by any other representative of the tradition. The greatness of Guru Nanak

115. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, p. 5.

lay in his capacity to integrate a somewhat disparate set of doctrines, and to express them with clarity and a compelling beauty."¹¹⁶ He again asserts, "The system developed by Guru Nanak is essentially a reworking of the Sant pattern, a reinterpretation which compounded experience and profound insight with a quality of coherence and a power of effective expression."¹¹⁷

To McLeod, "The Sant tradition was essentially a synthesis of the three principal dissenting movements, a compound of elements drawn mainly from Vaishṇava Bhakti and the *batba yoga* of the Nath Yogis, with a marginal contribution from Sufism."¹¹⁸ McLeod has emphatically maintained that the Hindu-Muslim amalgam theory is inadequate so far as the religion of Guru Nanak is concerned. He asserts, as Trumpp did earlier, that the influence of Islam on Guru Nanak's system was quite meagre and that too indirect i.e. through the Sant synthesis. McLeod affirms that it is "incorrect to interpret the religion of Guru Nanak as a synthesis of Hindu belief and Islam. It is indeed a synthesis, but one in which Islamic elements are relatively unimportant. The pattern evolved by Guru Nanak is a reworking of the Sant synthesis, one which does not depart far from Sant sources as far as its fundamental components are concerned. The categories employed by Guru Nanak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrines he affirms are their doctrines. This is not to suggest, however, that Guru Nanak's thought was precise copy of what earlier Sants had developed. He inherited the components of his thought from the Sants, but he did not transmit his inheritance unchanged. He received a synthesis and he passed it on, but he did so in a form which was in some measure amplified, and in considerable measure clarified and integrated. This applies in particular to his understanding of the manner of divine communication with man. Guru Nanak's concept of the *Sabad*, the *Nām*, the *Guru*, and the *Hukam* carry us beyond anything that the works of earlier Sants offer in any explicit form. It is Sant thought expanded and reinterpreted. The result is a new synthesis, a synthesis which is cast within the

116. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, p. 7.

117. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 151.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

pattern of Sant belief but which nevertheless possesses a significant originality and, in contrast with its Sant background, a unique clarity. It possesses, more-over, the quality of survival, for it remains today the substance of a living faith."¹¹⁹

The foregoing brief survey of the Western writers' views of the historical background of the Sikh tradition leads us to the conclusion that there is diversity of opinions even among the Western scholars on this issue. The majority of the writers are of the opinion that the Sikh movement is a movement within Hinduism, and it aimed at reforming the tradition. There are others who see the validity of Sikhism in its total rejection of the Hindu tradition. They believe that the movement of Sikhism struck at the very root of Hinduism. There is a third and more sober school which feels that the main aim of the movement was to reconcile the warring communities of the Hindus and the Muslims and in this effort Sikhism borrowed from both the traditions in order to prepare a common ground for convergence of the two—short of a national reconciliation. All have conceded to the significance and vital role played by Guru Nanak in initiating and shaping the tradition but they have accepted him the founder of the tradition only by qualifying the term. Some writers have also referred to the Sikhs' own view of the Divine origin of their tradition with the Divine call and mission of Guru Nanak, but not with the same force as it is accepted within the community. The divergence of opinions on the issue continue as there are no facts to prove any point of view, beyond doubt. The historical development of Sikh tradition betrays all the conclusions. There is no hope of arriving at any universally accepted conclusion on this issue as the people look at it from different perspectives. The Western scholars of Sikhism have failed to understand what the Sikh tradition means to the Sikhs themselves. The Sikhs expect of the Western Christian writers to view the question of the historical background of Sikhism, as they view the question of the historical background of their own Christian faith and tradition—not less than that. To the Sikhs their tradition consists of all the elements mentioned in the theories of the Western scholars, but their only plea is that, it is more than that a way

119. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 161.

of seeking liberation through participation. To them it is a Divine institution, capable of leading the people to the highest goal of mankind. Whatever may be the extent of influence of the earlier religious traditions on Sikhism in the Western writings, the foremost credit for initiating the Sikh movement also is given to Guru Nanak. A brief survey of the image of Guru Nanak in the Western writings will also prove helpful in understanding the Western perspective on the Sikh Religion.

GURU NANAK'S IMAGE THROUGH THE WESTERN WRITINGS

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the European Imperialism was at its peak. The Western Christian writers took full advantage of the state power. Their writings most of the time were of polemical nature. In their enthusiasm to preach the gospel among the non-Christian countries they endeavoured to present the darkest picture of the Non-Christian religions. Marshall agreeing with the above description of the European writings on Hinduism says, "Even if some intellectual curiosity about Hinduism was aroused, the attitude of the great mass of Europeans who came into contact with it was always either ridicule or disgust. Books were filled with accounts of a multiplicity of dieties, repellent images and barbarous customs. Most early travellers concluded that the Hindus were no more than idolaters, worshipping images or natural objects. This was the theme of the first Portuguese accounts from Malabar Coast. The Seventeenth century English traveller William Bruton, described the Bengalis as 'barbarous and idolatrous people', who worshipped the sun and the moon, animals and plants. Even in the early eighteenth century the Jesuit Pierre Martin told his correspondents :... you wou'd scarce believe me, should I name vile and infamous creatures to which they pay divine honours. It is my opinion, that no idolatry among the ancient was ever more gross, or more horrid, than that of these Indians."¹²⁰ Similarly Norman Daniel elaborating the Christian portrayal of Muhammad in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Latin writings says, "The life of Muhammad was seen

120. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 20-21.

as an essential disproof of the Islamic claim to revelation. It was often treated as the most important disproof of all. To this end writers believed and wished to show that Muhammad was a low-born and pagan upstart, who schemed himself into power, who maintained it by pretended revelations, and who spread it both by violence and by permitting to others the same lascivious practices as he indulged in himself."¹²¹

The case of the later writings is in no way different from these earlier ones. Against this background, the treatment meted out to Guru Nanak in the Western writings is an astounding exception. Commenting on the depiction of Guru Nanak in the Muslim and Christian writings Sarjit Singh Bal emphasizes, "But the point to be noted is that short of that and barring a few exceptions even Muslims and Christians have been all admiration for Guru Nanak throughout the four centuries that have elapsed since his death. They had looked upon most religious denominations in India as no more than ignorant sects, and their founders as imposters. But Nanak was obviously an exception who fascinated them."¹²² Bal's claim is fully sustained when one makes a survey of the Western writings on Sikhism. In order to avoid repetitions, we shall adduce here a few representative writings only.

In the opinion of Forster, "Nanock appears to have possessed qualities happily adapted to effect the institution of a new system of religion. He was inflexibly just; he enjoyed from nature a commanding elocution, and was endowed with a calm passive fortitude, which successfully supported him through the long course of a dangerous occupation."¹²³ Malcolm feels that, "the great success with which he combated the opposition which he met, afford ample reason to conclude that he was a man of more than common genius; and this favourable impression of his character will be confirmed by a consideration of the object of his life, and the means he took to accomplish it. Born in a province on the extreme verge of India, at the very point where the religions of Muhammad and the idolatrous worship of the Hindus appeared to touch, and at a moment

121. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, p. 79.

122. Sarjit Singh Bal (ed.), *Guru Nanak in the Eyes of Non-Sikhs* (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1969), p. XIV (Introduction).

123. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 293.

when both these tribes cherished the most violent rancour and animosity towards each other, his great aim was to blend those jarring elements in peaceful union, and he only endeavoured to effect this purpose through the means of mild persuasion. His wish was to recall both Muhammedans and Hindus to an exclusive attention to that sublimest of all principles, which inculcates devotion to God, and peace towards man. He had to combat the furious bigotry of the one, and the deep-rooted superstition of the other, but he attempted to overcome all obstacles by the force of reason and humanity. And we cannot have a more convincing proof of the general character of that doctrine which he taught, and the inoffensive light in which it was viewed, than the acknowledge that its success did not rouse the bigotry of the intolerant and tyrannical Muhammedan government under which he lived."¹²⁴ M'Gregor, giving the general view of other authors on Guru Nanak writes, "Nanak is described by all authors as a man of great moral courage, and possessor of power of eloquence which never failed to produce a great effect on his hearers. His object was to prove, by his precepts, example, and writing, that he was an inspired teacher. He harangued the people, who collected about him wherever he went; and he employed his leisure hours in composition."¹²⁵ Cunningham has given a very concise but comprehensive account of the character of Guru Nanak. He maintains, "Nanak appears to have been naturally of a pious disposition and of a reflecting mind, and there is reason to believe that in his youth he made himself familiar with the popular creeds both of the Muhammadans and Hindus, and that he gained a general knowledge of the Koran and of the Brahmanical Shastras. His good sense and fervid temper left him displeased with the corruptions of the vulgar faith, and dissatisfied with the indifference of the learned, or with the refuge which they sought in the spacious abstractions of philosophy. Nor it is improbable that the homilies of Kabir and Gorakh had fallen upon his susceptible mind with a powerful and enduring effect. In a moment of enthusiasm the ardent inquirer abandoned his home, and strove to attain wisdom by penitent meditation, by study, and by an enlarged intercourse

124. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 18-19.

125. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, pp. 42-43.

with mankind."¹²⁶ Cunningham continues, "The mild demeanour, the earnest piety, and persuasive eloquence of Nanak are ever the themes of praise....Nanak combined the excellences of preceding reformers, and he avoided the more grave errors into which they had fallen."¹²⁷ Cunningham further maintains, "he asserted no special divinity, although he may possibly have considered himself, as he came to be considered by others, the successor of these inspired teachers of his belief, sent to reclaim fallen mortals of all creeds and countries within the limits of his knowledge. He rendered his mission applicable to all times and places, yet he declared himself to be but the slave, the humble messenger of the Almighty, making use of universal truth as his sole instrument. He did not claim for his writings, replete as they were with wisdom and devotion, the merit of direct transcription of the words of God; nor did he say that his own preaching required or would be sanctioned by miracles."¹²⁸ Cunningham concludes, "Thus Nanak extricated his followers from the accumulated errors of ages, and enjoined upon them devotion of thought and excellence of conduct as the first of the duties. He left them, erect and free, unbiassed in mind and unfettered by rules, to become an increasing body of truthful worshippers."¹²⁹

R.N. Cust has evolved a very good criterion to find what is good and what is great, and judging by the same Guru Nanak to him was both. He relates, "the life of a person who by his actions and precepts has influenced the ideas and consciences of a large number of his fellow-creatures, both during his lifetime and for centuries after his death, can never be devoid of interest. When that influence has not been owing to his wealth, rank, or power, but simply to his own merits, that man must be called truly great; and when we find that his motives were unselfish, that after a long life devoted to the instruction of others in the paths of virtue and moral purity he died poor, and delegated his office, not to his children, but to that one of his disciples whom he considered most virtuous, that man must be considered truly good, as well as truly great.

126. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 35-36.

127. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

"Such was Baba Nanak, the first teacher and founder of the Sikh tenets. However much we may differ with him in many of his doctrines, we cannot but admit that he was one of those on whom the Almighty has vouchsafed special blessings; for during a long life of seventy years he laboured unceasingly at one object, viz. to reform the lives and religion of his countrymen, to break through the tyranny of priestcraft, word and deed, abstinence from lust, anger and avarice, were better than feeding Brahmans or making offerings at temples. He tried to amalgamate the Hindu and Muhammadan religions, and convince all that they were really brothers, descended from one Father."¹³⁰

It would be unbecoming on our part if we omit the name of great German missionary Trumpp in this context. Trumpp has avoided to make any general comment on the character of Guru Nanak, probably because of the reason that he could not find sufficient evidence to condemn Guru Nanak, and his religion as a whole. But it is not without surprise that he attaches some significance to the event of Guru Nanak's experience of Bein rivulet at Sultanpur. It is in a sense, though indirectly, conceding to the fact that Guru Nanak's mission was Divinely ordained one. "After the accident", says Trumpp, "which somehow seems to be based on historical fact, Nanak divided all he had among the poor left his house, and turned Faqir, Mardana accompanying him. The Khan endeavoured to retain a faithful servant, but Nanak stood firm on his resolution."¹³¹

Pincott following immediately after Trumpp maintains regarding the person and precepts of Guru Nanak, "Almost contemporaneous with Kabir there arose in the Punjab the great and good man....In 1469 the revered Nanak was born near the town of Lahore; and he came into the world inheriting the traditions which I have endeavoured to sketch, while the struggle between Hindu and Muhammadan thought and power was raging. The previous unsettlement in the minds of men had prepared the way for a devout and enthusiastic teacher to build up a new and living faith. Nanak was just the man for such a task; for he was thorough and consistent, prudent and yet

130. Cust, 'The Life of Baba Nanak, the Founder of the Sikh Sect', *Guru Nanak in the Eyes of Non-Sikhs* (ed.), p. 95.

131. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. IV (Prefatory remarks).

enthusiastic, inoffensive yet urgent, and as gentle in manners as he was strong in faith. Nanak was one of the great reformers of the world; for he clearly perceived the errors of his predecessors, and had the boldness to proclaim the truth even against the opposition of the prejudiced and the interested whether exalted or humble."¹³² In the view of Macauliffe, "Guru Nanak spoke of himself as neither continent nor learned, and was in every respect the essence of humility. His advent was heralded by no prophecies, and consequently he was not obliged to make or invent incidents in his life conformable thereto. He preached against idolatry, caste distinction, and hypocrisy, and gave men a most comprehensive ethical code; but in so doing he never uttered a word which savoured of personal ambition or an arrogation of the attributes of the Creator. He appears to have been on fairly good terms with Muhammadans, but his disregard of caste prejudices and his uncompromising language led him into occasional difficulties with the Hindus, though he was never embroiled in violent scenes. On the whole he was generally beloved during his life, and at his death Hindus and Muhammadans quarrelled as to which sect should perform his obsequies."¹³³ Macauliffe maintains further that, "Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammad."¹³⁴

Viewing the efforts of Guru Nanak in comparison with other contemporary religious reforms Archer says, "There was something in Nanak or was it circumstantial—which made possible a religion and a state. Perhaps he perceived more truly than did other reformers of the time the effectual principles of reformation and laid surer foundations of reforms. He may, indeed have had much in common with Kabir and with several lesser predecessors and contemporaries but his own mission yielded more positive and lasting fruits...."¹³⁵ Speaking of the reforms effected by Guru Nanak and his inheritance, Duncan

132. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, pp. 73-74.

133. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. I-LI (Introduction).

134. *Ibid.*, p. LIV.

135. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religions*, pp. 59-60.

Greenlees states, "Other reformers, other prophets and saints, strove elsewhere, each in his own way as taught by his Master, but in the Punjab Guru Nanak through the ten lives he devoted to his labours built a nation, brave and proud and strong, and taught men and women how to love God as a Friend, as a most beloved intimate, upright and self-respecting instead of prostrate on the ground. That was the spirit he infused into the Sikhs, and it transformed the whole picture of society in the North of India."¹³⁶

McLeod's work is the limit of our endeavour. In order to arrive at the understanding of Guru Nanak and his religion he undertook an exhaustive and painstaking survey of the Sikh traditions and the compositions of Guru Nanak. In the conclusion, he attempted to elaborate the image of Guru Nanak by combining the images of Guru Nanak emerging from the study of the Sikh traditions—the *Janamsākhis*, and the compositions of Guru Nanak. The image of the Guru thus discovered by McLeod is as follows: "The impression which emerges is that of a deeply devout believer absorbed in meditation and rejoicing in the manifestations of the divine presence, but refusing to renounce his family or his worldly occupation. Discipline there certainly was, but not renunciation and total withdrawal. The impression is also that of a revered teacher giving expression to his experience in simple direct hymns of superb poetic quality. Around him would be gathered a group of regular disciples, and many more would come for occasional *darsan*, or audience, with the master. And the impression is that of a man, gentle and yet capable of sternness, a man of humour and mild irony who could nevertheless reprimand and if necessary denounce, a man who experienced the inexpressible and who yet maintained an essentially practical participation in the everyday affairs of his community and the world beyond it.

"The combination of piety and practical activity which Guru Nanak manifested in his own life he bequeathed to his followers and it remains characteristic of many who own him as Gurū today. At its best it is a piety devoid of superstition and a practical activity compounded with determination and an

136. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. XXV (Introduction).

immense generosity. It explains much that has happened in the Punjab during the last four centuries and it explains much that can be witnessed there today."¹³⁷

The foregoing accounts of the image of Guru Nanak are an ample proof to show that the Western writers have great regard for the person of Guru Nanak and they are deeply impressed by his precepts. They are also highly appreciative of the reforms inaugurated by Guru Nanak and the degree of success he achieved in propagating his mission. Notwithstanding their appreciation of the person, precepts and practical success Guru Nanak, primarily remained to them 'Nanak the man'. The image of Guru Nanak emerging in their writings is to a larger extent centred on the historical Nanak. In their writings, 'the Nanak of faith', remains mostly unattended. However, in the traditional Sikh writings it is 'Nanak the Guru', or 'Nanak of faith' which forms the object of their reverence and devotion. To the Sikhs, the Guru was the path and the goal. So far as the religious aspirations of the Sikhs are concerned, Guru Nanak to them is their saviour, light and hope. But this aspect of Guru Nanak's image remained ignored in the Western writings. It was Archer who identified this distinction and pointed it out emphasizing the importance of the 'Nanak of faith' in the Sikh religious tradition. Archer maintains, "there have been two Nanaks, the factual and the formless". This may be recognised at once as something common in the history of religions. He was an historical person; he is also a theological construction. He is what India and the world think he is, he is also what Sikhs think of him—he is historico-theological to them, a real person and also a creature of religious fancy. He is emphatically the latter where and when he is the most revered. He is then Nanak *Nirankārī* (without form) or Nanak who is not only spiritual but incomparable as well....And yet the two Nanaks are not always to be distinguished from each other. They are two in one, both in practice and in theory."¹³⁸ It was this formless or Nanak of faith or the Nanak in spirit, that is central to the Sikh tradition and that was handed down to the succeeding generations through the nine gurus, and presently prevailing

137. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 231-32.

138. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas : A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. 57.

the community and guiding its destiny through the Granth and the Panth representing the spirit and the body of the Guru. It was around the person of Guru Nanak, and a response to his call that a religious community started gathering. Ever since its establishment the community has been continuously growing in size as well as in strength. For the first two centuries, the community was guided by Guru Nanak and his nine spiritual successors—who in the Sikh tradition are believed to be the nine manifestations of the spirit of Nanak. After the passing away of the tenth Sikh Guru—Guru Gobind Singh, the leadership of the religious community was passed on to the Guru Granth and the 'Guru Panth'. The concept combines the authority of the direct divine intuitive knowledge with the scope of modifications through the devotional participation.

WESTERNERS' VIEWS ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE SIKH TRADITION

Right from its small beginning around the teachings and the person of Guru Nanak the Sikh community (*sangat*) has evolved during the last five centuries. So far as the evolution of the tradition is concerned there is nothing special—all the living institutions evolve with the passage of time. The question which the Western scholars have asked again and again concerning the evolution of the Sikh tradition is whether the subsequent developments were totally in accordance with the original ideals and intentions of Guru Nanak. To be more specific whether the changes effected by Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh are in conformity with the spirit of the teachings of Guru Nanak? The question becomes all the more important for those scholars, who on the basis of their superficial knowledge of the tradition assume that Sikhism is a reforming sect of the Hindus or an attempt to amalgamate and reconcile the warring religions of Hinduism and Islam. These assumptions about the origin and nature of Sikhism incapacitated them to understand Sikhism as an integral growth. In opposition to the strict warning of Guru Gobind Singh himself, they separated Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh as the founders of two separate religious sects, assuming as if the Khālsā Brotherhood emerged out of the failure of the *sangat*

of Guru Nanak. They failed to understand the progressive manifestation of the spirit of Nanak in the ten Gurus, and finally institutionalized in the Guru Granth and the Guru Panth. Those who assumed that the change was real, traced its causes to the historical forces. But they have not been able to establish the similar transformation in the other similar sects growing under the similar historical conditions. Some writers have given credit for this special case of Sikhism to the creative genius and innovative perception of Guru Nanak, and some to the ethnic characteristics of the followers of Guru Nanak. But all the writers have not missed the point. Writers such as Cunningham, Macauliffe and Duncan Greenlees have understood the development of Sikhism in its proper perspective. A brief survey of some of the representative views of the writers on this issue will help elaborating this point.

Polier saw the declining Mughal power as the main reason of the expansion of the political might of the Sikhs. He says, "Originally and in general the Siques are zemindars or cultivators of land, and of that tribe called Jattas which, in this part of India, are reckoned the best and most laborious tillers, though at the same time they are also noted for being of an unquiet and turbulent disposition....The troubles and rebellions, which disturbed the empire during the tumultuous reign of Bahadur Shah, gave the Siques an opportunity of rising in arms, and shaking off the royal authority; this however, they did by degrees...."¹³⁹ Elaborating the reasons of evolution he further says, "Such has been the rise and progress of the Siques to this day which must be attributed, not so much to their bravery, conduct or military knowledge as to the anarchy and confusion that has desolated the empire...."¹⁴⁰

Tracing the causes of evolution Browne relates, "At first, the sect was merely speculative, quiet, inoffensive, and unarmed; they were first persecuted by the barbarous bigotry of Aurungzebe (begins actually with Jahangir); and persecution as will ever be the case, gave strength to that which it meant to destroy; the Sicks from necessity confederated together and finding that their peaceable department did not secure them

139. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 56.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

from oppression, they took up arms to defend themselves against a tyrannical government, and as will always happen where common rights of humanity are violated, a hero arose, whose courage and ability directed the efforts of his injured followers, to a just, though severe revenge."¹⁴¹ Further emphasizing the inherent vitality of the Sikh community, he says, "a sect which contained in its original principles so much internal vigour, as sustained it against the bloody persecution of a great government, determined and interested to suppress it, raised it up again with fresh strength on every opportunity which occurred, and at length enabled it so far to subdue all opposition, as to acquire an entire and undisturbed dominion over some of the finest provinces of the empire, from whence it makes incursions into others, holding out protection to all who, join and destruction to all who oppose it; a sect, which makes religion and politics unite in its aggrandizement, and renders the entrance into it so easy to all who desire to become members of it, cannot fail to extend itself very far, and in the end to be exceedingly formidable to all its neighbours."¹⁴²

As is evident from the views of Polier and Browne, they were acquainted with the Sikhs more as a political power than as religious community, but at the same time they were aware of the fact that it is the result of a gradual process of growth having its beginning in the teachings of Guru Nanak. Forster has attempted to explain the Sikh nation from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh in terms of the existence of two sects among the Sikhs. "The Sicque nation", he maintains, "is composed of two distinct sects, or orders of people, those who compose the most ancient one are denominated Khualasah, and adhere with little deviation, to the institutions of Nanock, and the eight succeeding priests; in obedience to which, the Khualasah sect are usually occupied in civil and domestic duties. They cut off the hair of their heads and beards, and in their manners and appearance resemble the ordinary classes of Hindoos.

"The modern order of the Sicques, entitled Khalsa, was founded by Govind Singh; who, deviating from the ordinances of his predecessors, imparted a strong military spirit to his

141. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

142. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

adherents, whose zealous attachment enabled him to indulge the bent of a fierce and turbulent temper, and to give scope to an ambition, naturally arising from the power which his popularity created."¹⁴³ Forster, it seems, has wrongly identified the *Sahajdhārīs* and the *Keshadhbārīs* as the Sikhs, respectively of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

Tracing the growth of Sikh religion Malcolm maintains, "As Nanac made no material of either the civil or religious usage of the Hindus, and as his only desire was to restore a nation who had degenerated from their original pure worship into idolatry, he may be considered more in the light of a reformer than of a subverter of the Hindu religion; and these Sikhs who adhere to his tenets, without admitting those of Guru Gobind Singh, are hardly to be distinguished from the great mass of Hindu population; among whom there are many sects who differ, much more than that of Nanac, from the general and orthodox worship at present established in India.

"The first five successors of Nanac appear to have taught exactly the same doctrine as their leader; and though Har Govind armed all his followers, it was on a principle of self-defence, in which he fully justified, even by the usage of the Hindus. It was reserved for Guru Govind Singh to give a new character to the religion of his followers; not by making any material alteration in the tenets of Nanac but by establishing institutions and usages, which not only separated them from other Hindus, but which by the complete abolition of all distinctions of castes, destroyed at one blow, a system of civil polity, that, from being interwoven with the religion of a weak and bigotted race, fixed the rule of its priests upon a basis that had withstood the shock of ages."¹⁴⁴ Malcolm further maintains that with the innovations and emphasis of Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism not only became anti-Muslim, but also unacceptable to the higher orders of the Brahmins: "Though Guru Gobind Singh mixes, even more than Nanac, the mythology of the Hindus with his own tenets; though his desire to conciliate them, in opposition to the Muhammedans, against whom he always breathed war and destruction, led him to worship at Hindu

143. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, pp. 309-10.

144. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 119-20.

sacred shrines; and though the peculiar customs and dress among his followers, are stated to have been adopted from veneration to the Hindu goddess of courage Durga Bhavani (the author is misrepresenting the facts as he does not seem to have the necessary information on this issue); yet it is impossible to concile the religion and usages, which Gobind has established, with the belief of the Hindus. It does not like that of Nanac, question some favourite dogmas of the disciples of Brahma, and attack that worship of idols, which few of these defend, except upon the ground of these figures before which they bend being symbolical representations of the attributes of an all powerful Divinity : but it proceeds at one to subvert the foundation of the whole system. Wherever the religion of Guru Gobind prevails the institutions of Brahma must fall. The admission of proselytes, the abolition of the distinctions of caste and eating of all kinds of flesh except that of cows, the form of religious worship and the general devotion of all Singhs to arms are ordinances altogether irreconcilable with Hindu mythology, and have rendered the religion of the Sikhs as obnoxious to the Brahmins, and higher tribes of Hindus as it is popular with the lower orders of that numerous class of mankind."¹⁴⁵

Inspite of all these changes the basic doctrines of Guru Nanak remained unaltered. The changes as John Malcolm further describes were effected in the sacred usages and civil habits : "The religious tenets and usages of the Sikhs continued as they had been established by Nanac till the time of Guru Gobind; who though he did not alter the fundamental principles of the established faith, made so complete a change in the sacred usages and civil habits of his followers that he gave them an entirely new character; and though the Sikhs retain all their veneration for Nanac, they deem Guru Gobind to have been equally, by the immediate favour and protection of the Divinity...."¹⁴⁶

The broad conclusion concerning the evolution at which Malcolm arrives is that with Guru Nanak Sikhism began as a movement of reform and reconciliation, but with the passage of time and because of the operation of historical forces, it

145. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

146. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

developed into a religion quite separate from Hinduism and Islam both. The primary merit of Malcolm's account is its being relatively more detailed and more consistent than any of the earlier accounts. Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, is also important as it has influenced the course of the Western writings on the Sikhs for a considerable period of time. The later writers, in the absence of any other detailed account of the Sikhs in English language, used his work as sufficiently dependable.

It was Joseph Davey Cunningham who in his *History of the Sikhs*, took to improve over the information and findings of Malcolm on the Sikhs, and which till today legitimately enjoys considerable respect among the scholarly writings. Cunningham describing Guru Nanak in relation to earlier religious reformers holds, "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."¹⁴⁷ Cunningham thus views the evolution of the Sikh ideas and institutions as the natural growth of the perceptions and innovations of Guru Nanak. Although it was the climax of Guru Nanak's vision but the modifications effected by Guru Gobind Singh are not of less significance. Having explained the institution of Amrit ceremony and the establishment of the Khālsā he maintains, "Gobind thus abolished social distinctions, and took away from his followers each ancient solace of superstition; but he felt that he must engage the heart as well as satisfy the reason, and that he must give the Sikhs some common bonds of union which should remind the weak of their new life, and add fervour to the devotion of the sincere. They should have one form of initiation, he said, the sprinkling of water by five of the faithful; they should worship the one indivisible God; they should honour the memory of Nanak and his transanimate successors; their watchword should be, Hail Guru, but they should revere and bow to nought visible save the Granth, the book of their belief.....Govind had achieved one victory, he had made himself master of the imagination of his followers; but a more laborious

147. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 34.

task remained, the destruction of the empire of unbelieving oppressors. He had established the Khālsā, the theocracy of Singhs, in the midst of the Hindu delusion and the Muhammadan error; he had confounded Pirs and Mullas, Sadhs and Pandits, but he had yet to vanquish the armies of a great emperor, and to subdue the multitudes whose faith he impugned.¹⁴⁸ Summing up the growth of Sikhism upto the period of Guru Gobind Singh he holds, "Thus at the end of two centuries, had the faith become established as a prevailing sentiment and guiding principle to work its way to the world. Nanak disengaged his little society of worshippers from Hindu idolatry and Muhammadan superstition, and placed them free on a broad basis of religious and moral purity; Amar Das preserved the infant community from declining into a sect of quietists or ascetics; Arjun gave his increasing followers a written rule of conduct and a civil organisation; Hargobind added the use of arms and a military system; and Gobind Singh bestowed upon them distinct political existence, and inspired them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent. No further legislation was required; a firm persuasion had been elaborated, and a vague feeling had acquired consistence as an active principle. The operation of this faith became a fact, is only now in progress, and the fruit it may yet bear cannot be foreseen. Sikhism arose where fallen and corrupt Brahmanical doctrines were most strongly acted on by the vital and spreading Muhammadan belief."¹⁴⁹ In the modifications introduced by Guru Gobind Singh, Cunningham sees the climax of process of institutionalization of the precepts of Guru Nanak. The changes introduced were based on the original vision of Guru Nanak but they were more suited to the challenges of the changed times.

According to Wilson, Muhammadan persecution and the personal ambition of Guru Gobind Singh were the main causes for the transformation of the Sikh religion. Discussing Sikhism among the religious sects of the Hindus he says, "A sect of much greater importance is that which originated with Nanak Shah, and which, from bearing at first only a religious character, came,

148. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

in time, to be a political and national distinction, through the influence of Muhammadan persecution and individual ambition. The enterprising policy of Gobind Singh and the bigotry of Aurangzeb converted the peaceful tenets of Nanak into a military code, and his speculative disciples into the warlike nation of Sikhs.¹⁵⁰ To Wilson 'Nanak Shāhis' and 'Gobind Sinhis' are two different sects of the Sikhs.¹⁵¹ At another place Wilson expresses that with the innovations of Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs not only deviated from the peaceful spiritual pursuits of Guru Nanak but also became antagonistic to the Muhammadans and the Hindus. "The succession of the son of Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind" says Wilson, "constitutes the most important era in the political progress of the community, and converted the Sikhs of Nanak, the disciples of a religion of spirituality and benevolence, and professors of a faith of peace and goodwill, into an armed confederacy, a military republic. The worship of "steel" was combined with that of the "book", and instead of attempting to unite Muhammadans and Hindus into one family fraternity, he made his disciples vow implacable hatred to the followers of Muhammad. He finally abrogated the distinction of caste, and opened his ranks to every description of persons, even to the very lowest Hindus, assigning to all his military adherents the name of Sinh or lion—a term peculiar to the Rajput Hindus."¹⁵² Wilson thus holds that after the reorganization of the Sikh Community by Guru Gobind Singh the military and political character of the Sikhs became more prominent and the spiritual character of the community became dormant.

To Trumpp Sikhism appeared to be a waning religion, that would soon belong to history.¹⁵³ Guru Nanak as he sees him, "was by no means an independent thinker, neither had he any idea of starting a new religious sect; he followed in all essential points the common Hindu philosophy of those days...."¹⁵⁴ The succeeding Sikh Gurus according to Trumpp did not make any

150. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 149.

151. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

152. Wilson, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 58.

153. Trumpp, Ernest, *Ādi Granth*, p. vii (Preface).

154. *Ibid.*, p. XCVII.

perceptible change in the doctrines of Guru Nanak. "The doctrines once uttered by Baba Nanak were taken up by the following Sikh Gurus without any perceptible deviation...."¹⁵⁵ Regarding the changes introduced by Guru Gobind Singh he says, "Guru Gobind Singh did not and could not essentially change the teachings of his predecessors. He describes the Supreme Being nearly in the same terms in his Jap, as the *Ādi Granth* does, though he was personally addicted to the worship of goddess Durga he made the worship of the One Supreme obligatory, though the adoration of minor deities, as we are taught by his own Granth, was by no means rejected.

"The changes and additions he made in Sikhism concerned chiefly to the ceremonial and social duties of his adherents; as he received men of all castes and creeds into the Khālsā and endeavoured to weld them into one religious and political body, he set up a number of new ordinances on all."¹⁵⁶ The changes that came into the character of the community were mainly organizational and outward. Inward life of the community continued, as initiated and instructed by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh, Trumpp believes relapsed into Hinduism as far as the use of Hindu mythology and emphasis on the goddess Durga in his compositions is concerned but the inclusion of all the castes into the egalitarian Khālsā permanently separated the Sikhs from the Hindus. Trumpp thus repeats the same theory of change as is held by Wilson and he does not think it worthwhile to go deep into the question, because the Sikh religion to him, at that time, appeared to be on the verge of extinction.

Pincott holds the same theory of the transformation of the community of faith as admitted by Wilson and Trumpp. "The Government of the next four Gurus" he says, "was chiefly characterised by conflicts with the Muhammadans; and at length the Tenth and last Guru arose, who completely changed the constitution of the fraternity. This was Guru Govind Singh, who was born in A.D. 1666 and educated as a thorough Hindu, being a devotee of the goddess Durga (This erroneous view has been expressed by some other writers also). He does not seem to

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*, pp. CXII-CXIII (Preface).

have troubled himself with points of doctrine; his chief care was to reorganise the society on a fighting basis, to enable it better to contend with its Muhammadan antagonists. For this purpose he converted the whole body into an army, which he named the *Khālsā*, that is "the pure", and conferred upon each member of the body his own name, Singh, or "lion". To the present hour the name of every member of the *Khālsā* or army of the faithful, ends in *Singh*. Guru Gobind Singh also finally abolished caste distinctions among his followers, and admitted members of all the castes to his army."¹⁵⁷ The *Khālsā* according to the view of Pincott, is a military organisation of the Sikhs, created to fight the Muhammadans and it does not have any relation with the outward manifestation of the inner growth of the precepts of Guru Nanak.

Macauliffe, perhaps is the first Western writer to have represented the Sikhs' own view of their evolution based on the traditional sources. In addition to his detailed account, in the six volume—*The Sikh Religion*, his condensed view on the issue is available in his article, 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant Race'.¹⁵⁸ But the account found in this article is also more descriptive than analytical. According to Macauliffe military characteristics of the Sikhs were inseparable part of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and Guru Gobind Singh's organisation of the community on military lines were in no way deviation from the precepts and teachings of Guru Nanak. Quoting an early tradition from Sikh history he says, "Guru Angad, the second Guru of the Sikhs, was the very essence of humility and obedience. Notwithstanding this, however, he inculcated and upheld military devotion and self-sacrifice. A soldier named Malu Shahi, orderly of a Mughal officer sought spiritual advice which would be profitable to him here and hereafter. The Guru counselled him, if ever the necessity of battle arose, to fight for his master, and not consider whether his side was in numerical minority or not."¹⁵⁹ He further quotes another tradition from the Sikh history: "One of Guru Arjan's last injunctions to his son, Guru Hargobind, was to sit fully

157. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 79.

158. Macauliffe, 'How the Sikhs Became a Militant Race', *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 27-53.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability. This was the turning point in the history of the Sikhs."¹⁶⁰ According to Macauliffe's account, one of the last instructions of Guru Gobind Singh to the Sikhs was, "Let those who are baptized according to my rites bear arms and live according to their means. Let them remain true to their sovereign in the battle-field, and not turn their backs to the foe. Let them face and repel their enemies, and they shall obtain both glory in this world and the heroes' heaven in the next. He who fleeth from the battle-field shall be dishonoured in this world, and, when he dieth, shall be punished for his cowardices, and nowhere shall he obtain happiness. Let the members of the Khālsā associate with one another and love one another irrespective of tribe or caste. Let them hearken to the Guru's instruction and let their minds be thoroughly imbued with it."¹⁶¹ The evolution of the Sikh community was a process of a natural growth of the teachings and the institutions established by Guru Nanak—the founder of Sikhism. All the elements of the tradition existed in the vision of Guru Nanak but they became manifest only when there were reasons for it in the history.

However, Archer is of the opinion that the later development of the Sikh tradition and institutions was at variance with its initial purpose: "Their movement, which can be accounted for within the compass of the last five centuries, originated actually in an earnest, hopeful effort towards the reconciliation, within India at least of Hindu and Islamic orders and ideas....And all the while their religion and their institutions developed somewhat at variance with initial purpose, and Sikhism became an independent and conspicuous order of its own.... Although Sikhism may have developed separately out of its very failure to accomplish its initial purpose, the failure may be called to some extent successful. The five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value—often bearing quite directly, for example, upon the major problems of comparative religion."¹⁶² Archer assumes that the initial aim of

160. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

162. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. v (Preface).

Sikhism was to reconcile Hindu and Islamic orders, and when he fails to find this purpose accomplished he proclaims, that it has proved to be a failure. However, he found that the later development of the tradition is also not without interest as it provides many practical lessons in the understanding of the development of religious traditions. In spite of the above judgement on the Sikh movement, Archer concedes that definitely there was something in Guru Nanak's thought which later became manifest. Commenting on the political dimension of the Sikh movement he says, "The early records which do mention Nanak put no stress on politics. Rather, they represent him as avoiding it. And yet, there was something in him. In his movement and in his times as he affected them which was destined to be tested by political affairs of the state. Was there something worldly after all in Nanak? And are not politics in the long run an inescapable and valid test of faith? The final estimate of Nanak, therefore, is a matter of the centuries, including like-wise the present fateful years of India's history."¹⁶³ Thus the writer seems to concede though indirectly that the seeds of later growth might have been inherent in the teachings of Guru Nanak.

Duncan Greenlees, follows Cunningham and Macauliffe on the issue of transformation of the Sikh tradition. The transformation of Sikhism as Greenlees sees, it is a gradual process of unfolding of the spirit of Guru Nanak and the different Gurus are nothing but the manifestations of the different divine virtues of the spirit of Nanak. They infact are one in ten Nanaks.¹⁶⁴

McLeod's theory of the evolution of the Sikh community is detailed and complex of all. In his enthusiasm to challenge the prevalent simple theory¹⁶⁵ of the evolution of the Sikh community, he has hazarded conjectures which are fraught with very dangerous implications for the Sikhs as a unified religious community. He has attempted to explain the evolution of the Sikh community in terms of a series of evolving new syntheses, in the course of their history. Guru Nanak according to McLeod did not evolve any synthesis. Rather he borrowed one that had

163. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-07.

164. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. XXXIV-CXVIII.

165. McLeod, *The Evolution of Sikh Community*, p. 5.

already been evolved in the Sant tradition.¹⁶⁶ The second important stage in the development of the Sikh community as McLeod sees it, occurred during the period of Guru Amar Das who developed a new Sikh pilgrimage centre at Goindwal and instituted the rites and ceremonies for the Sikhs distinct from the Hindus which created a consciousness of its own separate existence.¹⁶⁷ The Sikh community of this period, McLeod feels was an evolving Khatri-Jat synthesis.¹⁶⁸ The subsequent development including the changes at the time of Guru Hargobind were because of the ever growing assertion of the Jat cultural patterns.¹⁶⁹ The arming of the Sikh community at the time of Guru Hargobind, according to McLeod was more because of the reason of a large number of Jat admission into the community, who came with their arms, than with the last instructions of Guru Arjan Dev before his martyrdom at the hands of bigoted Mughals.¹⁷⁰ The penetration of the Sakti cult of the Sivalik hills into the Jat culture of Majha according to McLeod prepared the way for the creation of the Khālsā Panth.¹⁷¹ These in brief were the syntheses which were evolved in the course of the evolution of the Sikh community. In this theory only secular historical and cultural elements have been taken into account, and the factors of the genius and the charisma attributed to the Sikh Gurus in the tradition have been treated as of secondary importance. The theory developed by McLeod, based most of the time on conjectures may appear complex and consistent but it will remain unacceptable to the members of the Sikh community so long as they look at the Gurus as the object of their reverence and the source of inspiration and the Sikh community as an organization of this basic active religious feeling. McLeod has made a solid contribution in this area where he attempts to elaborate the cohesive ideals and institutions in the Sikh Panth.¹⁷² However, in this elaboration also he misses the mark when he explains

166. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

167. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

168. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 9-12.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

171. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

172. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-58.

the origin and significance of the cohesive ideals and institutions in terms of the syntheses conjectured by him.

From the above brief survey we can safely conclude that there is no unanimous view among the Western writers on the issue of the evolution of the Sikh Panth. Their contribution lies in their attempt to identify and elaborate the factors responsible for the transformation of the community. However, the majority of the writers could identify only historical reasons and they failed to identify the role of inner organizing forces and impulses at work in the development and transformation of such a closely knit religious community, as the Sikh community is. It was because of the inner vigour of the community that it met with success every new challenge that it came to face on its path to progress. It was thus around the person and the precepts of Guru Nanak that a small religious community coalesced. Ever since its beginning it has evolved through all the five centuries that have elapsed and has come to develop as an independent religious tradition—alongwith the religious traditions of the Hindus and the Muslims. It not only helped to mould and inspire the religious life of its own followers but also contributed largely to the religious life of India. What is more, through the endeavours of the Western writers, the material on the Sikh history and religion has become available in English and other European languages and this has prepared the ground for Sikhism's participation in the religious history of the world.

SIKHISM AMONG THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

To secure Sikhism its legitimate place in the history of the world religions was the pronounced aim of some of the Western writers, who laboured to produce voluminous works for the purpose. Cunningham in his preface to the second edition of the *History of the Sikhs* states, "The author's principle object in writing this history has not always been understood and he therefore thinks it right to say that his main endeavour was to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity, by showing its connexion with the different creeds of India, by exhibiting it as a natural and important result of the Muhammadan conquest and by impressing upon the people of

England the great necessity of attending to the mental changes now in progress amongst their subject millions in the East, who are erroneously thought to be sunk in superstitious apathy, or to be held spell-bound in ignorance by a dark and designing priesthood."¹⁷³ Macauliffe, expressing great satisfaction at the completion of his *magnum opus*, on the Sikh religion proclaims to his countrymen, "I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished through the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion. I have often been asked by educated persons in countries which I have visited, and even in India itself, what the Sikh religion was, and whether the Sikhs were Hindus, idolaters or Muhammadans. This ignorance is the result of the difficulty of the Indian dialects in which their sacred writings are contained."¹⁷⁴ Enumerating the advantages of his work he further states: "An advantage of a literary or historical nature was also anticipated from this work. It is hoped that it will throw some light on the state of the society in the Middle Ages and that it will also be useful for the student of comparative theology." He continues, "Professor Geheimer Hafrath Merx of the Heidelberg University, a very distinguished German savant has recently written to me: 'The publication of your work is certainly very desirable. You save in this way materials for the history of religions which, without your help, would probably disappear'."¹⁷⁵ Concluding his prefatory remarks he again expresses, "The author fondly hopes that this work, which contains an account of the last great religion of the world which remains to be exploited may escape the general fate."¹⁷⁶

In this context it is pertinent to mention that the work which Macauliffe accomplished could have been accomplished forty years before that, if the Secretary of State had entrusted the work of the translations of the Sikh scriptures to someone less haughty, less bigoted and less partial scholar than Ernest Trumpp. A huge amount was spent on the project by the British Government in India but Trumpp produced a very biased and

173. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XX (Preface).

174. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. v (Preface).

175. *Ibid.*, pp. XXII-XXIII (Preface).

176. *Ibid.*, pp. XXXIII-XXXIV (Preface).

distorted account of the Sikh religion and a very faulty and incomplete translation of their sacred writings. It was so negative and damaging that not only the Sikhs but some Western writers also had to reject it. Scholars of eminence of Max Muller also entertained regret about the work produced by Trumpp. "It is a pity that we possess so little information about the original Sikh reformers. Their sacred book the Granth Sahib exists, nay it has even been translated into English by the late Dr. Trumpp. But it turns out now that Dr. Trumpp was by no means a trustworthy translator.....Mr. Macauliffe, who has spent many years among the Sikhs, and has with the help of their priests paid much attention to their Granth Sahib, has given us some most interesting and beautiful specimens of their poetry which form part of their sacred book."¹⁷⁷

Scholars who have devoted their time and energy to the study of the Sikh religion have strongly recommended further exploration in this area promising various gains of such undertakings. Dorothy Field, making a strong case for the study of Sikhism says, "The religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatist standpoint—which is a favourite point of view in some quarters—it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior, is little short of a miracle. This practical and political side to the question should have a special interest for the West; and above all for Englishmen, who have so largely reaped the benefits of this grand faith. But apart from political considerations, the religious aspect is one which deserves special attention. Sikhism stands for a great body of religious thought in India, hitherto insufficiently recognised as an inherent factor. Through various nihilistic, pantheistic, or atheistic phases of Hinduism, and despite a vast number of elaborate observances, the ideals of pure monotheism have prevailed, from the time of their foreshadowing in the Vedas, through the work of such men as Ramanuj and Ramanand to their final epitome in the Sikh Gurus. There they gained new

177. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. XV (Preface).

fervour from Islamic influence, and, developing warlike ideals as the result of oppression, produced one of the great world religion, the latest to obtain recognition in Europe."¹⁷⁸

Archer maintains that the study of the Sikh history can provide important clues to the understanding of major issues in the discipline of comparative religion. "The five centuries of Sikh history", he states, "provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value—often bearing quite directly, for example, upon the major problems of comparative religions."¹⁷⁹ Archer further elaborates that the recital of the facts of Sikh history "provides materials in illustration of the principles which operate—or at least seem to operate during the interaction of any and all contiguous religions."¹⁸⁰ Greenlees contends that Sikhism is very much relevant, because of its spiritual merits: "The Sikhs should therefore have a great place in the future of their country, as so pure and spiritual a religion as theirs has already a great place among the religions of the world."¹⁸¹ Arnold Toynbee evinces a special role for the Sikhs and their tradition in the coming days of ever growing interaction of different religious traditions. The tolerant and liberal example of Sikhism, he feels, will provide a very positive and creative orientation to the religious traditions of the world. "Mankind's religious future", Toynbee relates, "may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen: the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate the Sikh religion and its scriptures the *Adi Granth* will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury."¹⁸² The religion of the Sikhs

178. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, pp. 34-35.

179. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadis*: *A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. v. (Preface).

180. *Ibid.*, p. VI (Preface).

181. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. X.

182. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* (Trans. by Trilochan Singh and others) (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1965), Foreword, pp. 10-11.

thus has the potential to play an active and positive role in the coming dialogue or interaction among the diverse religious traditions of the world.

The Western tradition of the Sikh studies is now almost two centuries old. Translations of the basic Sikh holy writings and the related materials on the Sikh religion and history are available in English including full length accounts of the Sikh religion and the Sikh history. The Sikhs not only have participated in both the world wars alongwith the English but they are also now found in almost all the Western countries as immigrants. Their religious tradition, far from being extinct, as prophesied by Trumpp and some others, is rather growing more than ever before and vigorously participating in the religious and secular affairs not only in their own country India, but all over the world, wherever they have settled. This progress also includes the academic study of their own religious tradition. Yet the Sikh studies have not so far received the proper representation in the study of world religions. Mark Juergensmeyer of the Graduate Theological Union, and the University of California, Berkeley has attempted to make a deep inquiry into the reasons responsible for this neglect and also the benefits that can be accrued by taking it seriously.¹⁸³

WESTERNERS' CONCERN FOR THE STUDY OF THE SIKH TRADITION

Mark Juergensmeyer begins by stating that Sikhism is an independent religious tradition judging by all the academic norms thereof. "Sikhism", he maintains, "is arguably the most neglected of India's religious traditions, even though it is a formidable and coherent tradition in both the narrow and broad meanings of the term."¹⁸⁴ He goes on to explain it, 'Tradition' alongwith 'religion', may be used in the Indian context only with qualifications, for neither word is easily translated in any Indian language. The terms frequently used for 'tradition',

183. Mark Juergensmeyer, 'The Forgotten Tradition : Sikhism in the Study of World Religions', *The Sikh Studies; Comparative Perspective on a Changing Tradition* (ed.) pp. 13-24.

184. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

paramparā and *sampradāy*, refer to a succession of spiritual authority through a line of masters and gurus. In that sense, then the Sikhs have their own tradition, for if any religious community in India can claim such a succession, it is certainly the community of the Sikhs. Even if one prefers the broad concept of 'cultural tradition' as it is used in Western scholarship, the term is still appropriate, for the Sikhs have a close knit, identifiable community with a heritage of symbols, customs, legendry, and social character which is distinctly their own. Because of its manageable size and relatively brief history, one would expect that the Sikh tradition would be especially useful for the student of the history of religions, as a compact and accessible case of the way in which traditions emerge, become established, and evolve."¹⁸⁵

Juergensmeyer examines the neglect of Sikhism by taking the categories of the general surveys of the world religions, general religious literature and Indian studies one by one. The basic cause of the neglect at which he seems to have reached is this, "If Sikhism is accepted as a religion separate from, but similar to, the Hindu tradition, then Sikhism vastly complicates our understanding of the traditions. It forces a discussion of what a tradition is, how it emerges, becomes distinct, and interacts with other traditions. Even more problematic, it throws open the question of whether there is such a thing as a Hindu tradition throughout the continent and throughout the centuries, about which one may write with certainty. The Sikh problem, then becomes the Hindu problem; and rather than facing that, the authors of the text-books dismiss Sikhism as syncretism or avoid it altogether."¹⁸⁶ He further maintains that the Sikh studies have been ignored in the texts on world religions because it challenges the definition of the religious traditions and it has been ignored from the thematic studies because it is too devotional.¹⁸⁷ Juergensmeyer goes on to explain that Sikhism has been ignored in the Indian studies on account of two basic prejudices. The first prejudice, he points out is against modern age compared to its classical age and the second prejudice is against regionalism as compared to a unified Indian or the

185. *Ibid.*, P. 13.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Hindu tradition. The Sikhism has been neglected because it is not only relatively modern but almost exclusively Panjabi.¹⁸⁸ If the Sikh studies are taken seriously according to the learned scholar, "The obvious benefit would be a more sophisticated understanding, of a rich and interesting religious tradition. But in addition, one might hope for a more complex interpretation of the whole India's cultural history."¹⁸⁹ Juergensmeyer has raised very pertinent issues regarding the present and the future of the Sikh studies and the study of world religions. Relatively modern origin of Sikhism, problems of the identification and location of the Sikh tradition, paucity of materials on all aspects of Sikhism and the shadow of the Hindu tradition on this small tradition are some of the reasons which have contributed to the neglect of the Sikh studies among the world religions.

But the picture on the whole is not as dismal as presented by the learned scholar. The Sikh religion is increasingly being recognized as having characteristic features of its own, even within its Indian or Hindu context. People recognise this only when their acquaintance with the Sikh tradition becomes more close. An interesting example of it can be seen in the two publications of Nicol Macnicol. In his *Indian Theism* first published in 1915 he discussed Guru Nanak alongwith Kabir is one of the chapters entitled 'Kabir and Nanak'.¹⁹⁰ But the same author in a later publication devotes an independent chapter to Sikhism.¹⁹¹ Jack Finegan has so deeply recognised the separate identity of Sikhism that he has included it in "The Archeology of the World Religions" series.¹⁹² After the publication of Juergensmeyer's article an independent chair on the Sikh studies has been established at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. and an independent course on the Sikh studies is being contemplated at Selly Oaks College at Birmingham. There is already a course on Sikhism in the Arts Social Sciences : An Inter-faculty second Level Course at the Open University, Milton Keynes and the Manchester University

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

189. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

190. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, pp. 135-139.

191. Macnicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, pp. 263-288.

192. Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of World Religions Shinto, Islam, Sikhism*, Vol. III (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 536-563.

has already published *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*.¹⁹³ Sikhism as a religious tradition, and as an area of academic interest, is attracting increasing attention that was long due to it. It is hoped that it would soon get its due representation on the academic map of the world. There is now a growing awareness of the distinct status and religion of the Sikh people all over the world. The Sikh religion, it is hoped will not only attract more serious scholars in the coming days but will also actively participate in the active inter-action among the diverse religious traditions of the world.

193. W.H. McLeod (editor and translator), *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, (Manchester: University Press, 1984).

CHAPTER 4

WESTERN PERSPECTIVE ON THE SIKH FAITH

The present chapter is a continuation of the preceding one. Whereas in the previous chapter we have endeavoured to present the Western view of the Sikh tradition focussing mainly on its origin, nature, evolution, place among the world religions, etc., in the present chapter we propose to explore the Western view of the Sikh faith. The term 'faith' is here being used in a very narrow and strict sense, to mean the Sikh religious beliefs and practices or, in the religious terms, the manifestation of the Divine Will, and the duties that it lays upon its adherents; hence, it should not be conceived in terms of the interpretation of the term as offered in the writings of Professor Paul Tillich—*The Dynamics of Faith* and Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith—*Faith and Belief*, etc. The focus from the previous to the present chapter has shifted from the general to the specific.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE FAITH : POLITICAL REASONS

The western writers, as noted earlier, had discovered at an early stage, the close connection between the religion and politics of the Sikhs. Their religion being one of the most potent factor behind their political power. Polier commenting on the origin and increase of the political power of the Sikhs finds religion as the basic inspiration behind it. He says, "It was not till the reign of Bahadur Shah that they began to appear in arms and endeavoured to shake off their allegiance, at which time under the direction of a new saint, one *Gorou Gobind*, they laid the foundation of a kind of republic, which might prove very formidable to its neighbours, and overwhelm them in the

end..."¹ Browne too has noted that sect of the Sikhs make, "religion and politics unite in its aggrandizement..."² It was, thus, first because of the political concerns of the Britishers and later on after the annexation of the Punjab, because of the administrative necessities that they got interested in the religion of the Sikhs. Since then till 1947, the political concern has remained the main factor in their perspective on the tradition and faith of the Sikhs. Their political involvement in the Sikh faith and tradition should always be kept in mind while taking account of their perspective on the Sikhs. It was perhaps, because of the political reasons that the Western writers repeatedly mentioned a prophecy attributed to Guru Tegh Bahadur, as if it had been one of the fundamentals of the Sikh faith. Later on, the virtue of loyalty to the sovereign too came to be added to it.

Concluding his paper on the Sikhs, Polier states, "I have nothing more to add to this account except a pretended prophecy, which the Siques say has been delivered down by some of their *Gorou*, that the Siques after remaining sometime the terror of India would at last be finally destroyed by white men coming from westward. Who are to be those white men, time must discover, but the Siques themselves think the Europeans will fulfil the prophecy, and are meant by it."³

Macauliffe enumerating the advantages of the Sikh religion to the state relates the same prophecy in the following manner supplementing it with one more, supposed to have been made by Guru Gobind Singh: "One day, as Guru Tegh Bahadur was in the top storey of his prison, the Emperor Aurangzeb thought he saw him looking towards the south in the direction of the Imperial Zenana. He was sent for the next day, and charged with this grave breach of Oriental etiquette and propriety. The Guru replied, "Emperor Aurangzeb, I was on the top storey of my prison, but I was not looking at thy private apartments or at thy queens. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy *pardās* and destroy thine empire". When it was represented to Guru

1. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 55-56.

2. Browne, 'History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs', *India Tracts*, p. 18.

3. Polier, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

Gobind Singh that a Muhammadan army would eventually come to overpower his Sikhs, he replied, "What God willeth shall take place. When the army of the Muhammadans cometh, my Sikhs shall strike steel on steel. The Khālsā shall then awake, and know the play of battle. Amid the clash of arms the Khālsā shall be partners in present and future bliss tranquility, meditation, and divine knowledge. Then shall the English come, and joined by the Khālsā, rule as well in the East as in the West. The holy Baba Nanak will bestow all wealth on them. The English shall possess great power and by force of arms take possession of many principalities. The combined armies of the English and the Sikhs shall be very powerful, as long as they rule with united councils. The empire of the British shall vastly increase, and they shall in every way obtain prosperity. Wherever they take their armies they shall conquer and bestow thrones on their vassals. Then in every house shall be wealth, in every house religion, in every house learning and in every house happiness."⁴ Macauliffe further expresses his regret at the ignorance of these prophecies of the Gurus among the younger generations of the Sikhs. Relating his personal experience he says, "I have only quite recently met in Lahore young men claiming to be descendants of the Gurus, who told me that they were Hindus, and that they could not read the characters in which the sacred books of the Sikhs were written. Whether the object of their tutors and advisers was or was not to make them disloyal, such youths are ignorant of the Sikh religion, and of its prophecies in favour of the English, and contract exclusive social customs and prejudices to the extent of calling us *Malechhas*, or persons of impure desires and inspiring disgust for the customs and habits of Christians."⁵

These lengthy but relevant quotations are ample proof of the presence of a powerful political factor in the Western perspective on the Sikh faith. Their interpretation of the Sikh faith was greatly inspired and conditioned by their own political involvement in the Sikh faith and tradition. Those aspects of the Sikh religion came to be more emphasized which could prove helpful to perpetuate the political hold of the English on

4. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. XVIII-XIX (Preface).

5. *Ibid.*, pp. XXIII-XXIV (Preface).

the Sikhs, those going against it were either omitted or misrepresented. It was primarily because of the political and later on also because of the missionary concerns of the Western writers that Sikhism purposely came to be misrepresented in their works. To Polier the Sikhs were the "terror and plague of this part of India,"⁶ and to Trumpp the Sikh Granth "incoherent and shallow in the extreme and couched at the same time in dark and perplexing language, in order to cover these defects."⁷

REASONS FOR THE FAVOURABLE VIEW OF THE FAITH

Leaving apart minor deliberate distortions of Sikhism by some Western writers their overall attitude to the Sikhs was much more balanced, reasonable and positive, compared with their attitude towards the religious traditions of the Hindus and the Muslims. One reason for their favourable view of the Sikhs may be that the Sikhism being a relatively small community could never present such a powerful and mighty challenge to the Western people as the Muslim or the Hindu communities could have posed. Another reason for the favourable view may be that after their defeat at the hands of the Britishers in 1849, the Sikhs most of the time remained indispensable ally of the English, as far as their military set-up was concerned. But the most important of all the reasons for the favourable Western view of the Sikhism was that being a comparatively modern and reformatory religious movement, Sikhism was free from most of those errors and evils which came to be attacked by the Westerners among the Muslims and the Hindus. The Sikh movement thus was already imbued with the reformatory zeal which the Christian missionaries endeavoured to introduce among the Indian religious traditions.

J.N. Farquhar giving the details of the reforms which the Protestant missionaries sought to introduce in India writes, "Their study of Hinduism and the Hindu community convinced

6. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 64.

7. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. VII (Preface).

them that, for the health of the people, many social and religious reforms were necessary, for example, the total abolition of caste, the prohibition of widow-burning, of child-marriage, of polygamy and of infanticide, the granting of widow of the right to remarry, the prohibition of human sacrifice, of the torturing of animals in sacrifice, of human torture in worship and of the gross obscenity practised in the streets."⁸ If we take into account the reforms contemplated by the Protestant missionaries to be introduced among the Hindus, it becomes immediately clear that Sikhism was not only free from these evils but was also vigorously advocating introduction of the reforms centuries before the arrival of the Christian missionaries on the scene. On the basis of the foregoing discussion we may safely maintain that if Sikhism came to be favourably viewed by the Westerners, it was because of the inner purity and the religious merits of the faith and the tradition.

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Sikhism has been studied and presented by the Western writers against its Indian religious background. They have attempted to interpret its nature in terms of its relation with the earlier religious traditions of India. Owen Cole's recently issued book *Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708*,⁹ is the culmination of this tendency of the Western writers. However, in this work Cole has attempted to explore the attitude of Guru Nanak and early Sikhism to other Indian religious beliefs and practices. It looks back at the Indian tradition from the Sikh perspective but the approach is the same. The work properly belongs to the same method of historical analysis.

The historical method is quite relevant and useful for the proper understanding of any religious tradition. Yet there remains something in the religious traditions which cannot be appropriated by following this approach. The essential teachings of all the religions are said to be relevant to all the historical situations. Sikhism viewed from the historical perspective is a

8. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 15.

9. W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708* (New Delhi: D.K. Agencies Pvt. Ltd., 1984).

movement of reform and reconciliation. It no doubt aimed at reforming the prevalent Indian religious traditions and reconciling the warring traditions of Islam and Hinduism. But the subsequent historical development of the Sikh tradition befittingly demonstrates that it was a movement larger than a mere attempt to reform or reconcile. Most of the Western writers not only presented Sikhism as a movement of reform and reconciliation but also interpreted its beliefs and practices in terms of its above mentioned nature. Interpretation of the Sikh doctrine of God by the various Western authors is an appropriate example of the above mentioned endeavour. The Sikh idea of God has been interpreted as representing the same conciliatory concerns of the Sikh Gurus. It is represented as an effort to synthesize the Muhammadan and Hindu ideas of God.

In addition to the emphasis on historical analysis, the Westerners' perspective on the Sikh religious beliefs and practices is conditioned by the understanding of their own religious beliefs and practices as explained in the systematic theology. The main emphasis in Sikhism as is now generally understood was more on spiritual discipline than on rational formulations. But the Western writers wanted to understand Sikhism in terms of theology. Their attempt to build the Sikh theology was largely conditioned by their own notion of theology. The very question, 'What is Sikh theology?' was quite foreign to the Sikh self-understanding. Sikhism in its origin was partially a reaction against overworked rational formulations. This should not be understood to mean that Sikhism lacked in theological contents. But the theological expression did not receive the same emphasis in Sikhism as it received in Christianity and in this sense emphasis on theological aspect was a new perspective on the Sikh religion. Majority of the questions raised by the Western writers about Sikhism were inspired in the main by their own Christian theological background. However, they did not enter into making any elaborate comparisons of the Sikh doctrine with their own Christian doctrines. They confined themselves strictly to the Indian religious background while making such comparative remarks about the Sikh doctrines and practices, although it was their own Christian theological background which guided their studies of the Sikh beliefs and practices.

CLASSICIST PREDISPOSITIONS

Another characteristic feature of the Western perspective on Sikh faith is its classicist predisposition. Such classicist leanings led the Western writers to trace the original and pure form of the Sikh doctrines in their classical writings. Under this influence they focussed mainly on Guru Nanak to trace the original doctrines of Sikhism. Further by establishing close affinity between Guru Nanak and Kabir they looked for the original pure doctrines of Sikhism in the works of Kabir. This tendency is very much active till today especially in the works of McLeod. There is no denying the fact that the Sikhs as a religious community owe their origin to Guru Nanak, but this emphasis sometimes leads to undervalue the importance of later historical manifestations of the spirit of Guru Nanak and these later developments of Sikhism are often sought to be interpreted as deviation from the original teachings of Guru Nanak. John Dillenberger and Claude Welch have emphatically maintained that, "the nature and meaning of Protestantism can be seen only in the light of its historical developments."¹⁰ The same assumption seems to be relevant to all other religious traditions in general, and to the Sikh religious traditions in particular. The later historical development of Sikhism however, is a natural growth of the spirit, inculcated by Guru Nanak.

IGNORANCE OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES

One more point regarding the Western perspective on Sikh faith is that for more than one century the Western writers on Sikhism did not have access to the original sources and that their information in the main came from secondary sources, and in some cases from personal, that is subjective, observations. Trumpp too has noted this limitation of the earlier Western writers on Sikhism. "All these authors", he wrote, "had not read the Granth themselves, but received the information they gave from second hand; it is, therefore, partly defective, partly labouring under mistakes."¹¹

10. John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted through its Development* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. IX (Preface).

11. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. XCVII (Introductory Essays).

CLASSIFICATION OF THE WESTERN WRITINGS ON SIKHISM

There are three main categories of the Western writings in which the accounts of the religious beliefs and practices of the Sikhs are to be found. In the first category may be enumerated those works which are devoted to the general survey of the Sikh history. Some small papers, articles, sketches, as well as full length histories of the Sikhs form part of his genre of literature. The works of Browne, Polier, Forster, Malcolm, Steinbach, M'Gregor, Cunningham, Archer, Barrier, etc., belong to this class of writings. Cunningham, however occupies a very special position among these writers. His *History of the Sikhs*, is a narration as well as an interpretation. It is an interpretation of the Sikh history in terms of the Sikh faith. In these studies brief descriptions of the religious beliefs, practices and institutions of the Sikhs have been included as forming an inseparable part of their history. However, the main concern of these writings remain the narration of the Sikh history.

The second category of writings in which the brief accounts of the religion of the Sikhs is preserved are those devoted to the religious history of India especially those dealing with the late medieval period. The authors of these writings are well versed in the Indian religious thought and practices. The account of Sikhism found in these works is very brief and sketchy and based mainly on secondary sources. But because of the familiarity of these authors with the religious thought and precepts, their accounts are relatively more specific and clear. The works devoted to the survey of the world religions may also be considered as part of this category, because the authors of these works too have discussed Sikhism as part of the Indian religious tradition. The works of Ward, Wilson, Cust, Pincott, Oman, Macnicol, Pratt, Rose, Carpenter, Farquhar, Jack Finegan, John B. Noss, Ninian Smart, etc., may be listed as belonging to this category.

The third category of the writings is that which is primarily devoted to the study and exposition of the Sikh religious ideas and life. The works of Wilkins, Trumpp, Macauliffe, Loehlin, Duncan Greenlees, McLeod, W. Owen Cole, etc., may be listed in this class of writings. Excepting Wilkins' brief observations

these writings are comparatively more detailed and based in the main on the study of the primary sources of Sikhism. It is primarily on the basis of these works that we shall attempt to present their analysis of the Sikh religious beliefs and practices.

It is pertinent to mention here that the historical aspect of Sikhism has not been omitted here rather due attention has been given to it, in these writings also. History in fact, forms an indispensable part of the Sikh faith. Emphasizing its importance Dorothy Field says, "The subsequent enmity of the Muhammadans, and the consequent development of martial tendencies on the part of the Sikhs, can only be understood in the light of history..."¹² Greenlees explaining the importance of history in Sikhism maintains, "The Sikh religion has never been a philosophy of books or theories, but as Mahtab Singh says it is a 'discipline of life', an ideal brotherhood inspired by passionate devotion to the highest, guided by the example of the Guru's own life, and interpreted in the life history of the Guru Khālsā Panth. Sikh history cannot be divorced from Sikh philosophy, it is its very life blood."¹³ History thus forms an indispensable part of the Sikh spiritual culture and helps to explain and interpret some of the basic issues of the Sikh faith.

MAIN CONCERN : THE SIKH THEOLOGY

To the Western writers the methodological perspective for the study of the Sikh religious beliefs and practices is provided by the Christian theology. They sought to elaborate the Sikh religious doctrines on the model of the Christian theology, keeping, however, in view of the distinguishing features of the Indian religious thought such as its acceptance of the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth, etc. If theology is to be taken to mean the study of the idea of God, it is the Sikh theology that the Western writers endeavoured to elaborate. They have attempted to analyse the Sikh religious beliefs in terms of the Sikh doctrine of God. Trumpp is the most conspicuous example of this tendency. He has attempted to explain the Sikh religious beliefs and practices in terms of the pantheistic idea of God which he

12. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, pp. 10-11.

13. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. XV (Preface).

believed to be the basic Sikh doctrine. Malcolm's account of the Sikh religion opens with his statement about the Sikh doctrine of God which according to his understanding is that of the nature of pure deism.¹⁴ Dorothy Field referring to the main doctrines of all religions states, "These concern God, His nature and attributes, the man and the means by which salvation may be attained."¹⁵ McLeod's methodological perspective could be gained from the following questions which he raises in order to understand the true nature of the beliefs of Guru Nanak, "Who, or what, is this God with whom Union is sought? Of what nature is He? Is He to be conceived in terms of personality? In what way is His being expressed to man? And what is man? Of what nature is his condition that he should seek to transcend it? What are the proffered means and how does he appropriate them? Having appropriated them how can he describe his regenerate condition, in so far as words are able to describe it?" McLeod continues, "These and many other related questions must be answered if we are to reach an adequate understanding of Guru Nanak's beliefs, of what may properly be called his theology." He further emphasizes "Theology is the correct word to use in this connection, for the whole of Guru Nanak's thought revolves around his understanding of the nature of God."¹⁶

McLeod's above comments leaves no one in doubt about the source of Western writers methodological perspective. The Western writers have produced most confused and incoherent accounts of the Sikh religious beliefs where they do not fit into the models of their own Christian beliefs. The analysis of the Sikh doctrine of God by various Western writers is an appropriate example of the above drift. The aim of the Sikh Gurus was more to express their experience of God in poetical forms, set to musical tones, for the purpose of recital, than to provide a rational account of the nature of God. But the contradictory accounts of the Sikh doctrine of God in the Western writings tend more to confuse than to clarify the Sikh belief of God. However, the later accounts being based on the

14. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 116.

15. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 43.

16. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 148.

Sikh sources are more close to the Sikh self-understanding than the earlier ones. After having made these few comments of the general nature of the Western perspective on the Sikh faith, it is now proper to turn to the Western writers' extant analysis and description of the Sikh religious beliefs and practices.

ANALYSIS OF THE IDEA OF GOD

It was quite at an early stage of the Western writers' connections with the Sikhs that they came to discover the basic Sikh emphasis on the unity of Supreme Being. But there is great divergence of opinion among them as to the nature of this unity, its sources and its implications for the Sikh faith. Wilkins, perhaps, is the first observer to have maintained in the most unambiguous terms the Sikh belief in one Omnipotent and Omniscient Reality. He was the first Western writer to have an opportunity to participate in the Sikh prayer session, and to listen reciting of the verses of the Gurus. Giving his impression of the recital of the hymn he says, "Their tones were by no means harsh; and the time was quick; and I learnt that the subject was a Hymn in praise of the Unity, the Omnipresence and the Omnipotence of the deity."¹⁷ With respect to the teachings of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, he gathered, "That this book, of which that standing near the altar, and several others in the hall, were copies, teaches that there is but one God, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, filling all space and pervading all the matter; and that He is to be worshipped and invoked."¹⁸ Commenting on the observations of Wilkins, Marshall expresses his suspicion about it saying, "He wrote a most beguiling account of the Sikhs; their religion commanded a belief in one God, Omnipotent and Omnipresent...; that there will be a day of retribution, when virtue will be rewarded and vice punished...and inculcates the practice of all virtues, but particularly an universal philanthropy..."¹⁹ Browne too has noted the veneration in Sikhism is not paid to minor deities: "The doctrine on which their sect is founded was introduced by Gooroo Nanak about two hundred and fifty years ago (should

17. Wilkins, *Asiatic Researches*, pp. 72-73.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

19. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 29 (Introduction).

be above three hundred years) and appears to bear that kind of relation to the Hindoo religion, which the Protestant does to Romish, retaining all the principles, but being abridged of most of its ceremonies, as well as of the subordinate objects of veneration."²⁰ Polier has gone to the extent of labelling Sikhs as atheists on the authority of the Muslims. However, his ignorance of the belief system can be known from the very sentence where he almost labels the Sikhs as atheists. Describing the Sikh mode and object of worship he wrote, "But their great object of worship is with them their own saints, or those whom they have honoured with the name of the *Gorou*. Those they invoke continually, and they seem to look on them as everything. *Wah-Gorou* repeated several times is their only symbol, from which the Muslmen have (not without reason) taxed them with being downright atheists."²¹ Explaining the Sikh idea of God, Forster remarks, "Instead of the inter-mediation of subordinate deities, they are directed to address their prayer to one God, who, without the aid of any delegate, is to be considered the unassociated ruler of the universe."²² Further annotating on the implications of the Sikh belief of God, in a footnote, he says, "when it is noticed that the worship of the Hindoos is loaded with a mass of puerile ceremony, and often times conducted with a ridiculous grimace, it will not seem surprising that a creed, founded on principles calculated to promote the establishment of a simple uniform religion, and promulgated by a man of distinguished tribe and exemplary manners, should draw to it proselytes even in the bigoted regions of India."²³ The Sikh emphasis on the unity of God thus was discovered even by the earlier Western writers on Sikhism.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward the original source of Sikhism became accessible for the Western writers, but their ignorance of the language kept crippling their proper understanding. However, from now onward the Western writers started qualifying the Sikh idea of the Unity of God by various philosophical or theological designations. Malcolm was

20. Browne, *India Tracts*, pp. 13-14.

21. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 63.

22. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 293.

23. *Ibid.*, footnote, pp. 293-94.

the first Western writer to have designated the Sikh idea of God as pure deism. He further represented the Sikh idea of God as an attempt to synthesize the Hindu and the Muslim ideas of God. In the religion of the Sikhs according to Malcolm, "We meet with a creed of pure deism grounded on the most sublime general truths, blended with the belief of all the absurdities of the Hindu mythology and the fables of Muhammedanism; for Nanac professed the desire to reform, not to destroy, the religion of the tribe in which he was born; and actuated by the great and benevolent design of reconciling the jarring faith of Brahma and Muhammad, he endeavoured to conciliate both Hindus and Muslems to his doctrine, by persuading them to reject those parts of their respective beliefs and usages, which he contended, were unworthy of that God whom they both adored."²⁴ He repeatedly maintains that except some small modifications necessary for the purpose of reconciliation of the Hindu and Muslims, Guru Nanak's basic doctrine remained pure deism. "All the principles", he states, "which Nanac inculcated, were those of pure deism; but moderated, in order to meet the deeprooted usages of that portion of mankind which he wished to reclaim from error."²⁵

If the notion of deism is taken to mean; "Belief in a Divine Creator, who did not intervene in world he had created,"²⁶ then it does not properly represent the Sikh idea of God. God, as held in Sikhism actively participates in His created universe. McLeod's interpretation more truly represents the Sikh idea of God when he emphasizes, "For Gurū Nānak God is a participant in the life of the universe which He has established, watching, directing, and upholding."²⁷ William Ward being well versed in Indian religious beliefs and practices was too quick to recognise the basic emphasis in Sikhism when he says, "Nanuku appears to have resembled Choitunyu, and many other Hindoos who have been celebrated for their attachment to the forms of devotion, in preference to barren speculations, and religious shows."²⁸

24. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 116.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

26. S.G. Brandon (ed.), *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p. 228.

27. W.H. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 169.

28. Ward, *The Hindoos* (History, Literature and Religion), p. 343.

Ward's 'Account of the Sikhs' is greatly indebted to Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, for many details but where basic religious principles are concerned he has his own interpretation to offer. This applies mainly to his understanding of the Sikh doctrine of God where he does not accept Malcolm's interpretation. Elucidating the doctrines propagated by Guru Nanak he says, "He maintained the doctrine of the divine unity, which it is probable, he learnt from the Musulman mendicants with whom he was very familiar : further, that God dwells in the devout, and this divine inhabitation renders the ascetic an object of reverence and even of worship; and that hence it became a duty to seek the society of devout mendicants. The other two points the most insisted upon by him were, devout attachment to the deity, and a harmless behaviour towards the creatures—To promote the spirit of devotion, Nanuku composed a number of sacred hymns in praise of the Deity, which have a place in the Adee-Grunthu; in which work repeating the names of God is enjoined on the Sikhs."²⁹ Elaborating the idea further, he says, "The doctrine of these two books (i.e. the *Ādi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*) respecting God is, that He is an invisible spirit, and is to be conceived of as being active and passive with and without qualities."³⁰

It seems quite appropriate to mention here that Ward was the first Western writer to have offered a summary of the basic ideas of the Japuji of Guru Nanak. A free rendering of the *Mūl Mantra* (basic creed formula) and the *Sloka* (couplet) as given by the author is as follows : "He is truth, the Creator and Governor of all things, omnipresent, free from fear and from enemies, immortal, everlasting, self-existent. He is truth; He existed in this form before the foundation of the world, and He remains the same while the world exists and after it shall be destroyed; He is to be known by means of a spiritual guide."³¹ Ward thus carefully avoids the label of deism for the Sikh idea of God. Compared to Malcolm his understanding of the Sikh idea is more close to the Sikh experience, as he was familiar with the basic ideas of the Japuji.

Steinbach and M'Gregor have not contributed anything

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

original to the understanding of the Sikh religious beliefs and practices. Both of these writers have stayed among the Sikhs for considerable period of time and had ample opportunities to learn about Sikhism and to collect relevant original information. Instead of adding anything to the existing information on Sikhism they have repeated the verbatim what Malcolm had said.³² McLeod commenting on the summary of the teachings of Sikhism offered by Steinbach says, "The list is more remarkable for what it omits than, for what it includes. At no point here, nor anywhere else in the book, does Steinbach demonstrate the remotest awareness of the critical importance of the Khālsā or any knowledge of its distinctive discipline. His one fleeting attempt to define the words indicates that he does not even understand its meaning." McLeod continues, "One might forgive a nineteenth century European his failure to comprehend the devotional discipline of the Sikhs, but an inability to grasp the meaning of the Khālsā after a nine year sojourn in the Punjab is a sorry commentary on the author's powers of perception. It is also clear that Steinbach had no notion of the contents of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, nor of the function of a gurdwara or dharamsala."³³

Cunningham and Wilson like Ward, Steinbach and M'Gregor are also heavily indebted to Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* for their knowledge of the Sikh tenets and practices. However, where the Sikh idea of God is concerned Cunningham's understanding is more close to Wilkins and Ward than to Malcolm. He refers to Wilkins in the footnote on this issue. Explaining Guru Nanak's idea of God in relation to other contemporary and earlier reformers he says, "Nanak combined the excellence of preceding reformers, and he avoided the more grave errors into which they had fallen. Instead of the circumscribed divinity, the anthropomorphous God of Ramanand and Kabir, he loftily invokes the Lord as the One, the sole, the timeless being; the Creator, the self-existent, the incomprehensible, and the everlasting. He likens the Deity to Truth, which was before the world began, which is, and which

32. Steinbach, *Sikh Empire: Culture and Thought*, pp. 116-19; M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, pp. 34-39.

33. McLeod, 'Colonel Steinbach and the Sikhs', *The Panjab Past and Present* (ed. by Ganda Singh), Vol. IX, Part II, Oct. 1975, p. 296.

shall endure for ever, as the ultimate idea or cause of all we know or behold."³⁴ In one of the appendices Cunningham has given the literal translation of several verses of the Guru including the *Mūl Mantra*, relating to the nature of God.³⁵ Wilson seems to be satisfied with what Malcolm had elaborated regarding the Sikh tenets and practices and considers it needless to repeat it. In his account of the Nanak Shahis, he explains, "It is unnecessary to detail the tenets and practices of the Sikhs, as that has been already performed in a full and satisfactory manner."³⁶ The reference here is to the *Sketch of the Sikhs* as is clear from other references in the same account at pages 150 and 152. However, in another article he has maintained the divine unity as the basic tenet of the Sikh Gurus. Explaining the nature of the Sikh scripture he states, "It is a large volume but contains no systematic exposition of doctrines—no condensed creed—no rules for ritual observances. It is an unconnected compilation of verses of a mystical or a moral purport, ascribed mostly to Nanak, except a general accordance in a sort of spiritual quietism and the acknowledgement of one divine cause and essence of all things."³⁷

It may be noted from the above discussion that brief accounts of the Sikh tenets and practices by Wilkins, Ward and Malcolm influenced the course of the Western interpretation of Sikhism for considerable period of time. The chief merits of these earlier but brief accounts are the sympathetic attitude of the writers towards the facts, their deep knowledge of the Indian religions and Indian history and help of the knowledgeable Sikhs which they could muster during their contacts with the Sikhs. Malcolm's label of deism for the Sikh belief of God has not been accepted by all the later writers, excepting Steinbach and M'Gregor and it finally came to be disregarded by Trumpp, not as an irrelevant interpretation of the Sikh idea of God but as having something positive in it which he feels Sikhism lacks in reality. Elucidating the Sikh idea of Nirvan in negative terms as the extinction of the individual existence, he maintains, "in

34. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 38.

35. *Ibid.*, Appendix XIX, pp. 329-30.

36. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 149.

37. Wilson, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 56.

a religion, where the highest object of life is the extinction of individual existence, there can be no room for a system of moral duties; we need therefore hardly point out, how wrong the statement of some authors is, that Sikhism is a *moralizing deism*."³⁸

Trumpp's general opinion regarding these earlier studies of Sikhism, however, is not far from reality when he says, "The religious system of the Sikhs has been touched already by different writers, but in such general terms, that but little can be gathered from them. Even H.H. Wilson, in his "Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus" has very cautiously handled this matter, and contended himself with offering a few short, though pertinent, remarks about it. All these authors had not read the Granth themselves, but received the information they gave from second hand; it is therefore partly defective, partly labouring under mistakes."³⁹ Some of these earlier works were based on the information supplied to these writers by the knowledgeable Sikhs but Trumpp's estimation with respect to the help of the traditional interpreters of Sikhism also differs from the earlier writers. Giving his own experience of the assistance of the traditional interpreters of Sikhism, he says, "But after I had succeeded in engaging two Sikh Granthis at Lahore, I was not a little surprised, when they declared to me, that the Granth could not be translated in the literal grammatical way I desired. I soon convinced myself, that though they profess to understand the Granth, they had no knowledge either of the old grammatical forms or of the obsolete words; they could only give me some traditional explanations, which frequently proved wrong, as I found them contradicted by other passages, and now and then they could give no explanation whatever; they had not even a clear insight into the real doctrines of the Granth. Other persons, who were recommended to me for their learning, I found equally ignorant."⁴⁰

The real cause of Trumpp's alienating the Sikh *Granthis* was, as we have mentioned earlier, his own arrogant behaviour and the disrespect he had shown to the Granth Sahib by

38. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, pp. CIX-CX (Introductory Essays).

39. *Ibid.*, p. XCVII.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. V-VI (Preface).

smoking in the presence of the Sikh *Granthis*. Trumpp's own estimation of his translation is as follows: "The Sikh Granth, which will always keep its place in the history of the religion, lies now open before us, and we know authentically what their Gurus taught."⁴¹ Without entering into the question of the validity of Trumpp's claim to authenticity we can maintain with some certainty that his attempt at translating the portions of the Sikh scriptures opened up the way for more authoritative and serious studies of the Sikh tenets and practices. Trumpp's hard labour, spread over years, gained but little for his own haughty behaviour, biased opinions and unsympathetic treatment of the original sources. For his prejudiced opinions and unfounded criticism his work came to be rejected not only by the Sikhs but also by the Western scholars. However, his efforts give a new orientation to the Western studies of Sikhism in particular and to the Sikh studies in general. Trumpp was too critical at a time when the full and proper information regarding the Sikh tradition and faith was still lacking.

In comparison with Trumpp, the significance of Macauliffe's work consists in the fact that he devoted his energies to collect and compile the authentic sources for the study of Sikhism without being critical and also being sympathetic to the Sikh point of view. Any further discussion on this issue would be out of place here as our only aim here is to emphasize the change that took place in the orientation of the Western studies of Sikhism with the publication of Trumpp's translation of the portions of the *Ādi Granth* and the *Janamsākhīs*.

Elucidating the Sikh idea of God and its source Trumpp maintains, "The chief point in Nanak's doctrine was the Unity of the Supreme Being, though the Hindu mind was already more or less familiarized with this idea; it having been asserted long before Nanak by most of the Hindu philosophical systems and popularized by the Bhagats, especially the ingenious Kabir."⁴² After having described various attributes of God, the creation as the expansion of the reality appearing distinct only because of the delusion created by the *māyā* and the absence of any teleological principles assigned to the creation he arrives

41. *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

42. *Ibid.*, p. XCVIII (Introductory Essays).

at the conclusion, "that this whole definition and description of the Supreme is altogether pantheistic."⁴³ But when he finds that personal qualities alongwith the pantheistic expressions have also been mentioned in the Granth Sahib he declares the whole system as contradictory: "That an Absolute Being, thus defined cannot be a self-conscious spirit, endowed with a free will and acting according to teleological principles, seems never to have struck their minds. For after the strongest pantheistic expressions the Supreme is again addressed as a self-conscious personality, who governs all things and take care of all creatures and with whom man endeavours to enter into personal relations. Contradictory sentences of this kind we find a great many in the Granth."⁴⁴

Departing from the views of earlier Western writers Trumpp maintains, "it is a mistake if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and the Muhammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu according to all his views, and if he had communionship with Musalmans and many of these even became his disciples, it was owing to the fact that Sūfism, which all these Muhammadans were professing, was in reality nothing but a Pantheism derived directly from the Hindu sources and only outwardly adapted to the forms of the Islam."⁴⁵ Thus according to Trumpp it was on the ground of Pantheistic doctrine that unity and tolerance between the Muslims and the Hindus is advocated in the Granth Sahib and not on account of Guru Nanak's pronounced mission.

Trumpp has also endeavoured to interpret the other tenets of Sikhism with reference to its supposed basic doctrine of pantheism. Elaborating the Sikh idea of sin he relates, "According to the pantheistic premises, as stated above, sin cannot be free, deliberate act of man; it must have on the contrary its origin in the Absolute Being itself as all creatures are said to be subject to an absolute destiny (*Lekh, Bhāg, Kirt*). This is plainly taught in the Granth."⁴⁶ Expounding the Sikh doctrine of *Nirvāṇ* he again contends, "If there could be any doubt on the pantheistic character of the tenets of the Sikh

43. *Ibid.*, p. C.

44. *Ibid.*, p. CI.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. CI-CII.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. CII-CIII.

Gurus regarding the Supreme, it would be dissolved by their doctrine of *Nirvāṇ*. Where no personal God is taught or believed in, man cannot aspire to a final personal communion with him, his aim can only be absorption in the Absolute Substance, i.e. individual annihilation. We find, therefore, no allusion to the joys of a future life in the *Granth*, as heaven or paradise, though supposed to exist, is not considered desirable object."⁴⁷

Trumpp's 'Sketch of the Religion of the Sikhs', is more detailed and more systematic than all the earlier accounts of the Western writers. His discussion of the Sikh idea of the Supreme Being is also more detailed than the earlier accounts. Having elaborated the Sikh belief of God in terms of pantheistic doctrine he has attempted to discuss all other Sikh theological tenets in relation to this basic idea. But he has failed to do justice to the Sikh doctrine of God because of his preconceived ideas. From an exhaustive survey of the contents of the *Ādi Granth*, one does not arrive at the pantheistic doctrine of the Supreme. But Trumpp's whole attempt is aimed at interpreting the Sikh doctrine in reference to the pantheistic doctrine. In this respect he goes to the extent of maintaining that, "Remarkable it is, but quite in accordance with the pantheistic principles of the system, that prayer to the Supreme is hardly ever mentioned in the *Granth*, whereas prayer to the Guru is frequently enjoined."⁴⁸

When the Sikh doctrines fail to comply with this pantheistic norm he complains that the whole system is contradictory. It is not the Sikh religious system which is self-contradictory, rather Trumpp's own analysis of the Sikh doctrines is partial and incomplete. It is because of this reason that his interpretation of the Sikh doctrines came to be rejected by the later writers as well as by the Sikhs. Trumpp is more inclined to show the logical contradictions in Sikh belief—system than to work out positive interpretation of the Sikh beliefs as can be traced in the holy verses of the *Ādi Granth*. Notwithstanding his linguistic skill and hard labour, Trumpp's translation failed to achieve its intended purpose.

47. *Ibid.*, p. CVI.

48. *Ibid.*, p. CX.

Pincott made a systematic attempt to refute the contention of Trumpp that Guru Nanak's relationship with the Muslims was accidental and that he remained a thorough Hindu.⁴⁹ In a detailed article he collected large amount of relevant material from the traditional Sikh literature including the material showing similarity of Guru Nanak with the Muslims in dress, doctrine and vocabulary to prove conclusively that his relation with the Muslims was more than casual. Disagreeing with the views held by Trumpp he affirms, "There seems to be superabundant evidence that Nanak laboured earnestly to reconcile Hinduism with Muhammadanism, by insisting strongly on the tenets on which both parties could agree and by subordinating the points of difference."⁵⁰ However, for his account of the other Sikh tenets, Pincott is greatly indebted to Trumpp.⁵¹ His understanding of the Sikh doctrines differs from Trumpp mainly on account of its emphasis on the conciliatory character. Elaborating the Sikh doctrine of God Pincott maintains, "Nanak's principles may be reduced to a single formula—the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. For Nanak there was no such thing as a God for the Hindus, a God for the Muhammadans, and a God or Gods for the outer heathen; for him there was but one God; not in the likeness of man, like Rama; not a creature of attributes and passions, like the Allāh of Muhammad; but one, sole, indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all-pervading, to be named, but otherwise indescribable, adorable and altogether lovely. Such was Nanak's idea of the Creator and Sustainer of the phenomenal world; and it was a conception which at once abrogated all petty distinctions of creed, and sect, and dogma, and ceremony."⁵² In the above description of Deity, Pincott's emphasis on its conciliatory character can easily be discerned. Beyond this point he follows Trumpp on all the theological ideas of Sikhism including his emphasis on its predominantly pantheistic character.

Macauliffe's voluminous work on Sikhism may be understood as remedial to Trumpp's misrepresentation and mistranslations. It is in accordance with his pronounced aim

49. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *A Dictionary of Islam*, pp. 583-594.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 591.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 589-591.

52. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 74.

which he declares in the preface, saying, "One of the main objects of the present work is to endeavour to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which he (Trumpp) offered to their Gurus and their religion."⁵³ Macauliffe was approached by the Sikhs to take up the translation work of the Sikh scriptures because of his known sympathetic attitude towards their faith and tradition. In one of his articles he reports, "Representative Sikh societies knowing that neither the Secretary of State for India nor the Indian Government would do anything to remove the ridicule and contempt which Dr. Trumpp had brought on their religion, and also feeling that I sympathized with them in the position in which their religion had been placed, requested me to resign the Indian Civil Service and make a translation of the sacred books, which would be acceptable to them and the general public."⁵⁴

The difference between the attitude of the two Western scholars can be known from the fact that whereas Trumpp alienated all the Sikh *Granthis* by smoking in the presence of the Holy Granth, Macauliffe's work was approved by the Sikh scholars,⁵⁵ whereas Trumpp declared Sikhism as a waning religion,⁵⁶ Macauliffe was reciting Japuji, ten minutes before his death came.⁵⁷ Trumpp was prejudiced and critical, but Macauliffe sympathetic and uncritical. It was in this context that Macauliffe's work came to be accepted as a corrective to Trumpp's unfounded criticisms and misrepresentations. Although far less analytical than Trumpp, Macauliffe was able to represent Sikhism and the Sikh scriptures in a more appropriate manner because of the continued assistance and guidance he received from the Sikh *Gianis*. The above noted concern of Macauliffe is reflected also in his description of the Sikh idea of God.

Like most of his predecessors, he too has emphasized the idea of the unity of God in Sikhism. He emphatically states, "The cardinal principle of the Gurus and Bhagats whose writings find place in the sacred books of the Sikhs was the

53. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. VII (Preface).

54. Macauliffe, *The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*, p. 6.

55. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. IX (Preface).

56. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. VIII (Preface).

57. Harbans Singh, 'English Translation of Sikh Scriptures', *The Sikh Courier* [Greater London : 88 Mollison Way, Edgware (Middlesex) Spring 1967], p. 5.

unity of God. This is traced to be the Vedic Postulate *Eko Brahma, dvitiya nasti*, there is one God there is no second. This is everywhere inculcated in the Sikh sacred writings with ample and perhaps not unnecessary iteration, considering the forces Sikhism had to contend within an age of ignorance and superstition."⁵⁸ According to the interpretation of Macauliffe, the unity of God in Sikhism is to be conceived in monotheistic terms⁵⁹ rather than pantheistic, as held by Trumpp.

In the *Dictionary of Comparative Religions*, monotheism has been defined as belief in one personal transcendent God, as opposed to belief in many gods (polytheism) and pantheism (identifying God with universe).⁶⁰ Conceived in this sense monotheism is completely opposed to the idea of pantheism. However, Macauliffe's rejection of the existence of pantheistic elements in the Sikh belief system is not total. He has attempted to explain this philosophical paradox in the following manner : "No religious teacher has succeeded in logically dissociating theism from pantheism. In some passages of the Guru's writings pantheism is,...distinctly implied, while in other texts matter is made distinct from the Creator, but an emanation from Him. Although anthropomorphic theism is a religion, while pantheism is a philosophy and anthropomorphic theism is generally held orthodox and pantheism heterodox, yet, on account of the difficulty of describing the omnipresent and illimitable in suitable human language, both religion and philosophy are inextricably blended by sacred as well as profane writers."⁶¹ Macauliffe goes on to quote from Old Testament and New Testament to prove this prevailing confusion :

"Doth not the Lord fill heaven and earth? (Jeremiah).

"God in whom we live, and move, and have our being (St. Paul)."⁶²

Existence of pantheistic elements in Macauliffe's analysis thus has not been completely denied. Realizing its importance and relevance, he has purposely described the Sikh idea of God against the notion of pantheism including its religious

58. Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, pp. 4-5.

59. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. LVII (Introduction); p. XIX (Preface).

60. Brandon (ed.), *A Dictionary of Comparative Religions*, p. 450.

61. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. LXIII-LXIV (Introduction).

62. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. LXIV.

implications. Explaining pantheism as a belief that God is diffused through all matter, and that it is, therefore, a part of Him, he goes on to elaborate further: "In India pantheism may be said to be the creed of intellectual Hindus, but it cannot be held to be generally satisfying or useful cult to the world. When a man believes that he is a part of God, and that God, who pervades space, pervades him also, moral obligation must obviously be relaxed. Nor can supplications be satisfactorily addressed to nature with its elemental forces, even though God be held to reside therein. Pantheism is too cold and too abstract to satisfy the reasonable aspirations of the human soul. And the fact admitted by most philosophers, that men are endowed with free will, must make them pause before they accept the pantheistic philosophy in its entirety. Moreover, to gratify his emotional instinct, man must have access in spirit to a personal God to appeal to in order to grant him favours, to afford him solace in affliction, to love him as a son, and as a kind and merciful friend to take an interest in him when he needs assistance. According to the Sikh Gurus, God was a being to be approached and loved as a fond and faithful wife loves her spouse and human beings were to be regarded with equality as brothers, and not to be considered as divided into castes which were at variance with or despised one another.

"But though the Sikhs believe in a personal God, He is not in man's image. Guru Nanak calls Him, *Nirankār*—that is without form. Gurdas speaks Him as formless, without equal, wonderful, and not perceptible by the senses. At the same time all the Gurus believed that He was diffused throughout the Creation."⁶³

Macauliffe's description of the Sikh belief of God is neither as detailed nor as analytical as offered by Trumpp. However, Macauliffe has convincingly shown that the pantheistic interpretation of the Sikh idea of God is hardly adequate to do full justice to all the ingredients found blended in the Sikh tenets. Stephen Dunning's estimation of Macauliffe's analysis of the Sikh doctrine of God in relation to Trumpp's interpretation is worth mentioning in this context. He maintains, "Macauliffe's treatment of the Sikh doctrine of God is a first example of his

63. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. LXII-LXIII (Introduction).

awareness of, and inability to deal with, the logical problems raised by Trumpp. Stressing the monotheistic nature of Sikhism and its deep opposition to the idolatry and superstition of Guru Nanak's age, he concludes that even with a 'formless' God no religion can ever totally eliminate either anthropomorphic theism or philosophic pantheism. However, he maintains that in Sikhism they are happily "blended" in the doctrine of the ineffability of God.⁶⁴

Compared to Macauliffe, Dorothy Field's account of the Sikh religious tenets is more orderly and cogent. Although she does not enter into the logical subtleties that Trumpp did, her brief description of the Sikh doctrines is more exhaustive and comprehensive. She is of the decided opinion that Sikhism is a monotheistic religion and her book opens with the assertion that, "It is a pure, lofty monotheism, which sprang out of an attempt to reform and simplify Muhammadanism and Hinduism, and which, though failing in this attempt succeeded in binding together, like judaism of old, a whole race in a new bond of religious zeal."⁶⁵ Regarding the sources of the Sikh monotheistic belief she maintains, "The founder of the religion, Nanak was on the one hand the spiritual descendant of monotheistic reforms within Hinduism, but on the other, Muhammadan influences caused him to break away very much more than the older faith, and to admit much that might be directly traced to the followers of the prophet."⁶⁶

In respect of the Islamic influence on the Sikh doctrine of God, Dorothy Field is more close to the position of Malcolm than to that of Trumpp. She has devoted her second chapter exclusively to trace the origin and growth of the idea of monotheism within Hinduism through its various stages and its connection with Islam.⁶⁷ According to her, great stress in Sikhism is laid on the unity and omnipotence of God.⁶⁸ God in Sikhism, she maintains, has been described in absolute⁶⁹ as

64. Stephen Dunning, 'The Sikh Religion : An Examination of some of the Western Studies', *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, No. I, p. 9.

65. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 9.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-42.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

69. *Ibid.*

well as personal terms.⁷⁰ While Divine incarnation⁷¹ has been denied in Sikhism the Divine Immanence⁷² has been asserted. The paradox of the Divine Immanence and transcendence in Dorothy Field's interpretation has been resolved in the following manner: "But the pantheism of the Gurus, is continually qualified by renewed insistence on the transcendent Diety. He remains the Being distinct from all the world. To mankind He is as the ocean to the dew-drop, complete and self-existent, but yet the true self of every individual."⁷³ Dorothy Field's work is not intended to resolve the supposed logical contradictions in the Sikh belief system, pointed out by Trumpp. She has made a sincere effort to describe the Sikh tenets sympathetically. Most of the contradictions have been resolved by her positive attitude. Her description of the Sikh idea of God is far more close to the Sikh experience than the prejudiced critical appraisal of Trumpp.

In the period following Macauliffe, Sikhism has been discussed by some authors whose main concern was not Sikhism, but the Indian religions. Sikhism in these writings came to be discussed as a part of the Indian religious tradition. The name of Farquhar, Macnicol, Oman, Pratt, Carpenter, etc. may be mentioned in this connection. All these writers have emphasized that the source of the Sikh tenets are to be found in the Indian religions. Sikhism in these writings has invariably been associated with the reform movement of Kabir. Farquhar⁷⁴ and Macnicol⁷⁵ have gone to the extent of suggesting that Guru Nanak was the disciple of Kabir. Some of the distinctive emphases in the Sikh belief-system have come to be accounted for the subsequent influence of Islam on Guru Nanak. These notices of Sikhism are relatively brief to deserve any prolonged attention and are based primarily on the works of Macauliffe and Trumpp. They all have maintained the reformatory character of the Sikhism.

As to the general nature of Sikhism Farquhar holds,

70. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

74. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 336.

75. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 136.

"Except in two matters his (Guru Nanak's) system is practically identical with that of many other Vaishnava sects. It is a theism and the main teaching of founder is highly spiritual in character."⁷⁶ He further explains, "The two points on which Kabir and Nanak were unlike earlier teachers were these : they condemned the whole doctrine of divine incarnations; and they never ceased to protest against idolatry, thus preventing their followers from using Hindu temples."⁷⁷ It may be noted here that Sikhism unlike the deistic interpretation of Malcolm has come to be recognised as theism with these later writers. Macnicol repeatedly regrets the lack of fully considered theology in the teaching of Guru Nanak. In respect of this absence of a fully elaborated theological system in Sikhism, he states, "In Nanak's own teachings we find much the same ideas as Kabir had taught, but carried further, and organised more fully into a system. It is true that neither Kabir nor Nanak is a systematic thinker. Neither troubles much with the metaphysical bases of his doctrine. An element of weakness in them both is the absence of a fully considered theology. They are eclectic teachers, guided rather by impulse and by intuition than by reflection."⁷⁸

In Macnicol's understanding the distinctive feature of the Sikh theology is its inconsistency. He finds the same inconsistency in the Sikh doctrine of God. At one place he finds in respect of Guru Nanak, "the influence of Hindu pantheism is strongly marked in his Granth."⁷⁹ At another place he maintains, "Perhaps just because of this sense of the hopelessness of obtaining the Formless one, Nanak, while he denounces Hindu idolatry, is much more tolerant than Kabir of Hindu polytheism. In his time no doubt the theistic sects who 'worshipped according to the instruction of Narad' might be described, as he is said to describe them in one hymn as 'ignorant fools' who take stones and worship them. At the same time the whole Hindu pantheon is recognized as holding a place beneath the *Nirākāra* and as bearing testimony to Him."⁸⁰

76. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 336.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 146.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

At another place describing the nature of Guru Nanak's doctrine of God he states, "so in his doctrine Hindu pantheism enfolded Muhammadan monotheism, subduing it indeed, but not entirely assimilating it to itself."⁸¹ In this context also he reiterates the earlier charge against the teachings of Guru Nanak that, "It is not surprising in one who is so little of a constructive theologian and who can make so little claim to speculative power, that echoes of Hindu and Muhammadan teaching are to be found throughout his writings with little serious attempt to fuse them into a consistent system."⁸² In accordance with his above conviction concerning the Sikh belief-system, he finally concludes, "In spite of the claim of Mr. Macauliffe that, 'It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality' than that of Guru Nanak, it can scarcely be disputed that it is largely an incompletely fused amalgam of ideas and sentiments contributed alike by Hinduism and Muhammadanism."⁸³ To prove the above contention he refers to the following facts: "In the worship of the *Guru* on the one hand and the *Granth* on the other we seem to see the double influence—that of the personal faith of Muhammad and that of the impersonal Vedanta."⁸⁴ From this last quotation we can easily judge the shallowness of his understanding of Sikhism. It seems that his fascination for the systematic theology has blinded his reason to understand the true nature of the teachings of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak's main aim was not to present any coherent speculative system but to propagate a way of life based on personal experience.

Pratt's description of the Sikh idea is relatively more close to the Sikh self-understanding than that of other writers of this category, but like other writers belonging to this class it is too brief. With respect to the idea of God in Sikhism he states, "Like Kabir, Nanak proclaimed the unity of God with all the vigour of Muhammadanism. Yet the God of Nanak, like that of Kabir, is of the Indian rather than of the semitic type. He lacks the anthropomorphism of Allāh, and he has much of the Immanence of Vishnu, or even of Brahman. Moreover, even the many gods of Hindu pantheon are retained as subordinate

81. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53.

spirits—good and bad—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva being considered the first creations of the One God. In no way, however, does the acceptance of the Hindu devas as subordinate beings militate against the monotheism of Nanak, any more than the angels of Islam and Christianity make those religions polytheistic. Not Kabir or Muhammad is more outspoken in attack upon polytheism and idolatry than is the founder of the Sikh religion. Nor does the doctrine of incarnation, so dear to the vaishnavite, fare any better at his hands.⁸⁵ Pratt's understanding thus is more comprehensive and more fair to the Sikh beliefs and practices. The main difference from the other writers consists in his attitude than in the sources. He has sympathetically described what the sources seem to suggest than to focus on the logical contradictions in the system as Trumpp and Macnicol have done.

It was expected of Archer and Loehlin to have offered detailed accounts of the Sikh tenets as both of these scholars have devoted their chief works to the exclusive study of Sikhism. But compared with other earlier writers whose main area of study is not Sikhism, we find much less elaboration of the Sikh beliefs in the works of these two learned authors. Loehlin has devoted three and a half pages of his book to the theological concepts in Sikhism and that too is a summary of a paper by Bhai Jodh Singh, and it is included in the second edition.⁸⁶ The same findings have been repeated in his later book.⁸⁷ Archer's position is not much different from Loehlin as far as the study of the Sikh religious ideas is concerned. He too has given a brief summary of the Sikh theological ideas as found explained in the *Gurmat Nirney*,⁸⁸ by Bhai Jodh Singh. In his examination, Stephen Dunning too has noted this important omission by Archer. He says, "It is not until his last chapter that Archer finally turns to the theological questions raised by Trumpp, and then all he presents is a brief paraphrase of Jodh Singh's exposition of the Sikh theology."⁸⁹ The reasons for this important omission

85. Pratt, *India and Its Faiths*, pp. 243-244.

86. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and their Scriptures*, pp. 49-52.

87. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, pp. 47-51.

88. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religions*, pp. 311-315.

89. Stephen Dunning, *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, p. 13.

in these works are not clear. From Loehlin's books which are of the nature of journalistic surveys— it appears that he was perhaps not competent to elaborate this aspect of Sikhism as the greater part of his time was spent in the field devoted to missionary work. He was interested in Sikhism only because of his practical necessity. He was engaged in the missionary work among the Sikhs. Archer perhaps was convinced that there was no real theology in Sikhism.⁹⁰ Stephen Dunning's comment seems quite in order as Archer himself maintains regarding the basic text of the Sikh faith, "the Japuji itself is of a texture similar to that of its own prologue and its postlude—it embodies spontaneous, loosely woven bits of doctrine which despite some incoherence in their presentation, have peculiar force, a forcefulness which increases with telling."⁹¹

It is clear from the above that Archer believed that there is no coherent theological system in Sikhism. However, in addition to the brief account of the Sikh theological ideas given on the bases of Bhai Jodh Singh's book as stated above, he has attempted to describe briefly the basic Sikh tenets, in the sixth chapter of his book devoted mainly to the translation of the Japuji.⁹² In this chapter he maintains respecting the Sikh belief of God that He is "the one, universal, all powerful, loving God, the Creator and Supreme Spirit who makes no unfavourable distinctions among men, even though they themselves are born 'high and low by His will' the God Who looks upon men's hearts rather than upon their deeds, Who takes account of the potential goodness in all mankind—a slightly optimistic note unusual in Hindu India. They present the view that God may be called by any name, Brahma, Hari, Rāma or Allāh, for example, provided that those who call upon him by any one of these affirm that God is not only any one of them—but indeed also more than all of them in one. Nanak, however was not himself a pantheist or a polytheist nor yet a Monotheist. His psalms repudiate at least, most of the popular ideas and practices of loose, contemporary Hinduism and soften the rigors of Islamic deism."⁹³ Archer, thus does not clearly

90. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

91. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Abmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. 115.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-33.

93. *Ibid.*

specify his position. In a book of three hundred and fifty pages on Sikhism, such a small and vague note on the basic doctrine does not give any credit to the author.

At other places also he does not elaborate the ideas which are held to be of paramount importance in the tradition. In respect of Guru Nanak he maintains that he is "the simple earnest servant of *Sat Nām* (Name of God) by verbal declaration and by inner consecration."⁹⁴ What is *Sat Nām* in the theology of Guru Nanak, has not been analysed by the author in any detail. Stephen Dunning has justly concluded with regard to this study saying, "the two greatest failings of Archer's study are his conviction that Sikhism has no real theology and his constant derogation of the Sikh ethics."⁹⁵

Loehlin's position on this point slightly differs from Archer as he recognizes Sikhism as ethical monotheism. As to the Sikh idea of God, he holds, "God is one, His name is truth, He is omnipresent and merciful (immortal, fearless, and without enmity). This is ethical monotheism; and in spite of a tinge of Hindu pantheism and Muslim arbitrary absoluteness, this is the general tenor of the Granth. In opposition to the Sankhya teachings that matter has existed from eternity, and to the teaching that the creation is an emanation so that it is really the body of the Absolute, God is Creator and just as Genesis puts it, God said, 'Let there be...' and there was."⁹⁶ Loehlin has disregarded the position held by Trumpp, but his refutation of Trumpp's arguments is not systematic nor does he elucidate the idea of ethical monotheism in any detail. In his small books on Sikhism, he has attempted to cover so many aspects of Sikhism that neither critical evaluation of the earlier writers' views nor systematic presentation of his own findings was possible in them.

Compared to Archer and Loehlin, Greenlees' account of the Sikh idea of God is far more detailed and comprehensive and is supported by a fresh rendering of the relevant verses from the Sikh scriptures. Greenlees's main aim was not theological but to offer a new translation of the selected and representative verses of the Sikh scripture. He has classified the

94. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

95. Stephen Dunning, *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, p. 13.

96. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, p. 47.

selected passages on the pattern of theological system. The classification thus helps one to gain an insight into the theological contents of Sikhism also. Each chapter devoted to a particular theme is further divided into various sub-sections thus giving full comprehensive view of the each related theme as propagated in Sikhism. The chapter devoted to the Sikh idea of God is entitled, 'The Glory of God'.⁹⁷ The very title of the chapter amply shows that the main emphasis of the author is to describe the religion of the Sikhs than to provide theological analysis. But his translations of the verses are elaborated at the end of each sub-heading by his own comments on the ideas, touched upon in the translated verses. In the second part of the book he has offered a fresh rendering of the Japuji of Guru Nanak which contains the essence of the whole teachings of the Guru.⁹⁸ The main theme of each stanza of the Japuji has been elucidated in the comments of the author made at the end of the translation of each stanza. The main concern of the author in the book is to offer classified basic materials from the Sikh scripture, than to make a theological analysis of the texts. The chapter devoted to the description of God is further divided into the following sub-headings. "The Creator of all things", 'Is Himself their goal', 'God is infinite', 'His greatness is untold', 'He knows all', 'gives all', and 'pervades all', 'He is the only actor', 'He alone is true and all nature adores Him'.⁹⁹

The classification of the material thus is aimed at providing a comprehensive view of the Sikh belief of God. It would not be relevant here to go into all the details of the idea given by the author; only one example is being cited here to show his approach. Commenting on the presence of pantheistic elements in the Sikh idea of God he says, "When we detach our minds from the blinding egoism, we see that in all alike is only God, that this whole universe is but the curtain behind which He plays His shadow play, that in all we see and hear there is really nothing but He. Yet is this no vulgar pantheism, for God is not bound or limited by His Creation, the Divine actor does not forget His real Self for all the varied parts He may play in this wonderous drama. He assumes so many roles, disguises Himself

97. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 28-58.

98. *Ibid.*, Part II, Chapter Nine, pp. 216-265.

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-58 (sub-heading 9-18).

in so many forms, and yet remains apart from all of them transcendent as well as immanent in all."¹⁰⁰ Greenlees thus has endeavoured to grasp the whole teachings of the Guru in a sympathetic manner and has expressed it in the language that speaks of his devout, sympathetic and impartial treatment of the subject. Because of his attitude his translations, and representations of Sikhism have been accepted and appreciated even by the Sikhs. There cannot be more valid criterion than this for judging the sympathetic and objective approach of an outsider author to a foreign faith and tradition.

If Duncan Greenlees' main concern is to represent Sikhism in its own true light, the efforts of McLeod are oriented to make a comprehensive statement of the Sikh theology. In McLeod's analysis of the holy verses of Guru Nanak,¹⁰¹ the Western understanding of Sikhism reaches a stage where it has gained a comprehensive and exhaustive view of the Sikh beliefs and practices, and a fare and systematic statement of the Sikh theology. On more counts than one he has fared far better than any of his Western predecessors, on Sikhism. In many respects he has made significant original contribution to the Western understanding of Sikhism and has taken it a step forward.

As mentioned earlier McLeod's analysis of the Sikh theology is primarily based on an exhaustive survey of the *bāṇī* (sacred utterances) of Guru Nanak, and not on the basis of the whole of the *Ādi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*. He has the following explanation to make, of the differences between the two : The two are largely but not completely co-terminous and at one important point there is divergence. A theology of Guru Nanak as opposed to Sikh theology must omit the contributions of Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh, and of concepts which evolved during the eighteenth century. In the case of the third, fourth, and fifth Gurus the omission concerns amplifications which are certainly valuable, particularly in the case of Guru Arjan, but which involve no significant modification of the pattern set out by the first Guru. With Guru Gobind Singh, however, comes the institution of the *Khālsā* and finally the emergence of the belief that with his

100. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 47.

101. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 148-226.

death in 1708, and the consequent termination of the line of personal Gurus, the function of the Guru had been vested in the scripture (The *Ādi Granth*) and in the corporate community (the Khālāsā). This is of considerable importance. For modern Sikhism the scripture exists as a channel of communication between God and man, but obviously this could be no part of Guru Nanak's theology. It must be understood, however, that this doctrine, its significance notwithstanding, is no more than a supplement to the teachings imparted by Guru Nanak. The theology of Guru Nanak remains the substance of Sikh belief."¹⁰² No other Western scholar except Trumpp has taken trouble to emphasize this important point concerning the evolved nature of Sikh theology. Trumpp, however at the beginning of his 'Sketch of the Religion of the Sikhs', points out, "We need, therefore, in the following sketch of the Sikh religion not anxiously distinguish between the words of Baba Nanak and those of the following Gurus, as none of them excelled by originality of thought, every succeeding Guru being content to expatiate on the few ideas handed down to him by his predecessors."¹⁰³

The above noted two quotations relating to the same issue also point out the difference found in the attitude and grasping of the main concerns of the Sikh Gurus by the two leading Western scholars on Sikhism. Trumpp's attitude is irreverent and his grasping of the main concern of the Sikh Gurus inadmissible. The main aim of the Sikh Gurus was to show the way out of human sufferings and miseries than to formulate a well thought out philosophical system. McLeod agrees with the traditional interpretation that the basic emphasis in Sikhism is on the unity of God.¹⁰⁴ But he has maintained that in respect of this affirmation choice has to be made whether this unity is one of monotheism or monism.¹⁰⁵ Monotheism according to his explanation refers to the uniqueness of God, to His absolute difference in essence from all other beings and monism affirms the basic unity by denying ultimate reality to all phenomenal existence.¹⁰⁶ He

102. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 163.

103. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. XC VII (Preface).

104. McLeod, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

accepts monotheism as the appropriate designation for the Sikh idea of God for the reason that the Sikh notion of God cannot be equated with the ultimately unreal *Īshvara* of Shankara's philosophy.¹⁰⁷ In the context of his above acceptance he has appropriately referred to the two distinguishing features of the Sikh monotheism. The first being that duality—which is basic to the monotheistic beliefs—has been considered to be the main cause of human problem, and its removal as the main goal of human life.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, in Sikhism great emphasis has been laid on the immanence of God in creation.¹⁰⁹ On account of these two characteristic Sikh emphases he cautions, "If the thought of Gurū Nānak is to be designated monotheistic we must be clear that this is not to be constructed in the Semitic sense,"¹¹⁰ McLeod has endeavoured to explain these philosophical contradictions by emphasizing the mystical nature of Guru Nanak's thought. He maintains, "The basis of Gurū Nānak's thought is best understood if approached as the thought of one who was essentially a mystic. 'Duality' is to be destroyed, but it is to be a swallowing up in mystical union. The creation does indeed provide a vital revelation of God, but the physical phenomena which impart this revelation are to be regarded as expressions of God of grace who dwells not only in creation but also beyond it. The ultimate essence of God is beyond all human categories, far transcending all powers of human expression. Only in experience can He be truly known. Man must indeed seek to give human expression to this mystical experience, and Gurū Nānak's works are directed to this very end, but the human expression can communicate no more than a glimpse of the ultimate reality."¹¹¹

All rational ideas about God thus are bound to be partial and inadequate. McLeod further explains that God as held in Sikhism is to be construed as personal God. He relates, "Gurū Nānak's own expressions of the experience and of the path to it plainly show that the one of whom he speaks is conceived as a personal God, a God of grace to whom man responds in

107. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 165.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*

111. *Ibid.*

love. His understanding of God as Creator and his repeated emphasis upon divine grace make this abundantly clear."¹¹² Trumpp has emphatically maintained the pantheistic character of the Sikh religion. But McLeod contends, "Strict pantheism is also excluded, for immanence is accompanied in the thought of Gurū Nānak by a notion of transcendence."¹¹³ The idea of divine immanence should not lead to believe that the Sikh monotheism is to be reached through a belief in polytheism. He clarifies that "stress upon the many as the expression of the one must always be related to the concept of revelation through the created universe. It should not suggest any notion of implicit monotheism expressed through a plurality of deities, except in the sense that the deities of Hindu mythology are occasionally used as symbols to represent particular aspects of the divine activity."¹¹⁴

The names of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva do find mention in Sikhism but they are not held here in the traditional sense of the Hindu belief. Elaborating the Sikh belief in the Hindu triad, McLeod states, "God did not merely create Brahma, He created the world also and He it is who sustains it. God is Himself Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer, and His direct exercise of these functions reduces all demiurges and subordinate deities to meaningless shadows."¹¹⁵ His final conclusion regarding the position of these deities in Sikhism is that "They survive only as convenient illustrations, as conventional figures who will occasionally serve to exemplify a particular point."¹¹⁶ The Sikh emphasis on the unity of God is also revealed from the names that Guru Nanak uses for God. The names from both the Hindu and the Muslim traditions for God, such as Hari, Ram, Gopal and Allāh, Khudā and Sahib have been used by Guru Nanak.¹¹⁷

The other aspects of the Sikh idea of God which McLeod has elaborated are the *nirguna* and the *saguna*. God is both absolute and conditioned, unmanifest and manifest. In its primal aspect God is referred to as *nirguna*—absolute, unconditional

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

116. *Ibid.*

117. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-67

and devoid of all attributes.¹¹⁸ In His *nirguṇa* form God is completely beyond the range of human comprehension.¹¹⁹ The same *nirguṇa* God of His own free will becomes *sagūṇa* "in order that man might know Him, and knowing Him enter into a unitive relationship with Him."¹²⁰ McLeod has pointed out to a possibility of misunderstanding with respect to the *sagūṇa* aspect of God. He says, "the term *sagūṇa* is generally used in connection with Vaiṣṇava bhakti and in this customary sense it implies a belief in divine *avtārs*. This is certainly not the meaning which is to be attached to the word in Gurū Nānak's usage, nor in that of any of his successors. In Gurū Nānak's usage the term relates not to anything resembling anthropomorphism, but to his concept of divine immanence."¹²¹

He has further described God in Sikhism as Creator, Sustainer, Destroyer, Sovereign, Eternal, Formless, Ineffable, Immanent. God is unknowable and inaccessible in His primeval *nirguṇa* form, but He manifests Himself through His creation. In this form He is omnipresent, pervades all. "God who dwells in all creation has His particular abode within the human heart,"¹²² and through the word of the Guru he is revealed to man. McLeod sees a very special significance of this immanent aspect of God. In this aspect God reveals Himself to man, comes within the easy reach of those who aspire to unite with Him. Emphasizing the deep practical implications of the Immanence of God in Creation and within human heart and the possibility of its being known through the word of Guru he maintains, "This is no more aesthetic mystery, no mere source of numinous awe which, however impressive it may be, leaves man essentially where he was. Here we are at the crucial point, the point at which there can exist communication between God and man, and through which there can develop that relationship which means release and salvation. Failure to grasp this is regarded as fatal."¹²³ McLeod continues, "For Gurū Nānak the saving activity of God is expressed at this point. Here, in the

118. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 167.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Ibid.*

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

123. *Ibid.*

divine order (*Hukam*), is the inscription of His will for all who are able to read it. Here is the word (*Sabad*) and the Name (*Nām*) acquire the substance which render them meaningful to the human understanding. And here it is that Gurū's voice is to be heard."¹²⁴

McLeod here has attempted to develop the Sikh theory as to how God communicates Himself to man. No doubt the point has been mentioned in the traditional Sikh interpretation, but the systematization of the whole idea is the original contribution of McLeod to the Sikh studies and deserves close examination. McLeod's discussion and elucidation of the Sikh idea of God is thus more detailed, profound and exhaustive than any other Western as well as Sikh scholar. His theological perspective and linguistic analysis of the conceptual terms have helped us to gain a more clear and comprehensive idea of the fundamental Sikh belief.

Cole, another Western writer, who has written three books on Sikhism too has discussed the concept of God in Sikhism.¹²⁵ Unlike McLeod, Cole maintains regarding the Sikh idea of God, "it is certainly monistic in the sense that the types of quotations referred to above emphasize an ultimate unity of such a kind that the world derives from God and will be reabsorbed in Him."¹²⁶ Beyond this one sentence he does not elaborate his point. Compared to McLeod, Cole's discussion is neither detailed nor exhaustive. No doubt he has presented a sympathetic account of the Sikh doctrine and in it he has the cooperation of a devout Sikh friend but his analysis is not as deep as McLeod's. Moreover, he does not dispute with McLeod's position and in his conclusion he rather agrees with him on many points, without mentioning it. McLeod's interpretation of the Sikh theology remains unchallenged and unsurpassed among the Western writers. We may fully agree with Stephen Dunning's conclusion with regard to McLeod's analysis of the Sikh theology. Stephen Dunning states, "If we may accept Sher Singh's (author of *The Philosophy of Sikhism*) analysis as fundamentally representative of the Sikhs, new, more

124. *Ibid.*

125. Cole, *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 68-75, 95-100 (Co-author, P.S. Sambhi).

126. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

sophisticated self-understanding, then on his theological grasp alone—McLeod fares far better than any of his Western predecessors.¹²⁷

From the foregoing survey of the Western understanding and interpretation of the Sikh idea of God it may be safely assumed that considerable divergence exists among the different writers. The Sikh belief has differently been designated as 'atheistic', 'deistic', 'pantheistic', 'monotheistic' and 'monistic'. The difference in interpretation may be attributed to various reasons, including the availability of the reliable original information, the academic and religious background of the writers, their personal attitude, degree of assistance and cooperation of the Sikhs to the author, etc.

The Western understanding of the Sikh beliefs, as may be gathered from the above survey, has evolved through various stages. It was not expected of the earlier writers to have provided as detailed and comprehensive a view as is found in the accounts of the later writers. The true nature of the Sikh belief of God also became only gradually known through the passage of time. However, one thing that was discovered about Sikhism at an early stage of the Westerners' connections with the Sikhs, and is affirmed by almost all the authors continually, is its insistence on the unity of God. Another common factor that persists through the Western writings on Sikhism is their Western Christian theological perspective. This common methodological perspective determines the nature of their questions concerning the Sikh belief-system. Excluding one or two important authors, the Sikh emphasis on the unity of God has also come to be appreciated and appropriated by all the Western writers as something resembling their own Christian tradition.

As regards the sources of the Sikh belief, there were genuine problems and difference of opinion still persists in this area, even among the Sikhs themselves. The Western writers in their elucidation have endeavoured to represent the Sikh idea of God as a reformatory and conciliatory effort on the part of the Sikh Gurus against its Indian religious background. All the other Sikh theological beliefs and practices derive from the

127. Stephen Dunning, *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, p. 18.

conception of this cardinal Sikh belief. Minor differences in the representation of the Sikh beliefs that occur among different writers refer to the differences in their understanding of the basic Sikh doctrine of God. Differences occurring between Trumpp and McLeod point to the difference in their understanding of the Sikh doctrine of God. These differences are especially prominent among those writers who have striven to provide systematic account of the Sikh theological beliefs. But most of the Western writers were unequipped to furnish such a systematic account of the Sikh beliefs because of their lack of comprehensive knowledge of the Sikh scriptures, and also of the Sikh way of life. Majority of the Western writers were contented with describing only a few prominent beliefs and practices of the Sikhs without properly relating them to the total structure of the Sikh belief-system. Their incapacity to provide inclusive account led them to believe that there is no comprehensive belief-system among the Sikhs. Among the Western writers on Sikhism only Trumpp and McLeod have attempted to provide detailed and all-embracing accounts of the Sikh theological doctrines. Trumpp, however, is led astray at the very outset by misreading the pantheistic elements in the Sikh idea of God. His misconception of the basic idea led to the misrepresentation of the other aspects of the Sikh belief-system. It was due to his mistaken view of the Sikh idea of God that he arrives at the following erroneous conclusions regarding the Sikh beliefs :

"No teleological principle whatever is assigned for the production or destruction of the created beings; they are cosmogonic revolutions, which could not be accounted for and were therefore referred to a sporting propensity for the Absolute. We need hardly remark that this whole definition and description of the Supreme is altogether pantheistic."¹²⁸

"His aim is, in one word, the *Nirbān*, the total cessation of individual consciousness and reunion with the vacuum."¹²⁹ Buddhism is therefore in reality, like Sikhism, nothing but unrestricted pessimism, unable to hold out to man any solace, except that of annihilation."¹³⁰

128. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. C.

129. *Ibid.*, p. CVI.

130. *Ibid.*

"Remarkable it is, but quite in accordance with the pantheistic principles of the system, that the prayer to the Supreme is hardly ever mentioned in the Granth, whereas prayer to the Guru is frequently enjoined."¹³¹ "...in a religion, where the highest object of life is the extinction of individual existence, there can be no room for a system of moral duties; we need therefore hardly point out, how wrong the statement of some authors is, that Sikhism is a *moralizing Deism*."¹³²

These and many other misrepresentations of the Sikh beliefs by Trumpp are rejected and replaced by more appropriate interpretations by the Western writers following him. It was expected of Macauliffe who has translated the larger portions of the Sikh scriptures—to have offered more detailed and inclusive account of the Sikh religious beliefs—he somehow has failed to accomplish this task. His description of the representative Sikh religious beliefs is neither detailed nor comprehensive. However, he has striven hard to disprove some of the wrong interpretations of Trumpp by elaborating them in the proper perspective. Macauliffe's elucidation of the doctrine of *Nirvāṇ* as a positive goal may be cited as an example of his positive effort.¹³³ Dorothy Field's work, as referred to earlier is based on the work of Macauliffe. She raises quite appropriate theological questions¹³⁴ and in her elaboration of the Sikh beliefs and practices is relatively more systematic and clear than Macauliffe. Like Macauliffe, she too has laboured hard to refute some of the misconceptions of the Sikh beliefs introduced by Trumpp, but her own account of the Sikh religious ideas is very very brief. Greenlees's main concern is to translate and compile the representative verses of the Sikh scriptures. As hinted earlier, he has classified the sacred verses according to the main theological ideas. His work also, thus, is very helpful to gain the proper understanding of the Sikh beliefs. But his main aim was to offer translations rather than to attempt interpretation.

131. *Ibid.* p. CX.

132. *Ibid.*, pp. CIX-CX.

133. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. LXIV-LXV (Introduction).

134. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 43.

LIMITATIONS OF THE EARLY WRITERS IN TRACING THE BELIEF-SYSTEM

Reasons, why all the other authors excepting these few have preferred not to elaborate the Sikh belief-system are few and simple. Firstly, these authors were not familiar with the Sikh scriptures. Secondly, the Sikh Gurus have recorded their experiences in the poetic forms, meant primarily to be actualized through singing rather than scholastic hair-splitting. In poetry prominence is accorded to the order and expression of emotions and feelings rather than ideas. The natural expression of the sacred Sikh experience is through poetry than through dogma. Some of the authors have referred to these and some other difficulties in their accounts. Malcolm's chapter on the religion of the Sikhs opens with the following comments : "There is no branch of this sketch which is more curious and important, or that offers more difficulties to the inquirer, than the religion of the Sikhs."¹³⁵ Trumpp explaining this difficulty in the elucidation of Sikh ideas states, "Nanak himself was not a speculative philosopher, who built up a concise system on scientific principles; he had not received a regular school-training, and uttered, therefore, his thoughts in a loose way, which are now scattered through the Granth and, must first be patiently searched out and collected into a whole, before we can form an idea of his tenets."¹³⁶ Trumpp has succeeded in identifying the genuine problem but he has failed to grasp the real nature and purpose of the mission of Guru Nanak. Dorothy Field has more clearly understood the purpose of the Sikh Gurus. She says, "Subtle philosophy was foreign to the purpose of the Sikh Gurus...Their method of reasoning was generally speaking, a passionate declaration of the value of real religion and bitter sarcasm against those who proved false to it. Their service to the thought of their day was above all things a practical one..It was the proclamation of a new way of salvation, a new means of escape from things as they were."¹³⁷

Greenlees too has pointed out to this basic concern of Sikhism. He maintains, "The Sikh religion has never been a

135. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs : Their Origin, Customs and Manners*, p. 116.

136. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. XCVIII.

137. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 51.

philosophy of books, of theorists, but as Mahtab Singh says, it is a 'discipline of life', an ideal of brotherhood inspired by passionate devotion to the highest, guided by the example of the Guru's own life, and interpreted in the life-history of the Guru Khālsā Panth.¹³⁸ Explaining the nature of the Guru Granth he further says, "The Granth Sahib is a collection of devotional hymns and prayers. In it there is little of explicit philosophy or ethics; both can be deduced from countless scattered references. It would hardly exaggerate to say that the Guru assumes these in his Sikhs, though he does not hesitate to insist on them from time to time."¹³⁹ McLeod's appraisal of the basic nature of the Sikh scripture is far more accurate than these earlier authors. Elucidating the point he maintains, "The theology is not, of course, set out in any systematic form. Guru Nanak's writings bear witness to his experience of God and the characteristic expression of that experience is the hymn of praise which it engenders. Neither Guru Nanak nor Guru Arjan who compiled the *Ādi Granth*, sought to set out his beliefs in an integrated pattern and we should not expect them to have done so. Theirs was essentially a religion of experience, the 'real' rather than the 'notional'. The latter can, however, do much to impart an understanding of the former."¹⁴⁰

Sikhism in its origin was partially a reaction against the over-worked rational as well as ritualistic formulations. Devotion to God and service of the mankind replaces the above two aspects in Sikhism. The main concern of the Sikh Gurus was to inspire and inculcate genuine devotion for God. Devotional poetry rather than rational formulations was more suited to the purpose of the Guru. Sikhism does not place the same emphasis on dogma, as is found in the case of Christianity. However, belief pattern is not altogether missing here. It can be easily recognised by making an attentive perusal of the sacred compositions of the Sikh Gurus.

One characteristic of Sikhism which has been repeatedly emphasised by the Western writers is its relative consistency and clarity of the belief-pattern in opposition to the other medieval Indian devotional movements. But as noted above, earlier

138. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. XV.

139. *Ibid.*, p. CLI.

140. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 149.

Western writers on Sikhism, have not provided integrated accounts of the religious beliefs and practices. They have mentioned only those conspicuous aspects of Sikhism which relate mainly to the object of worship, mode of worship, mode of initiation into the community, form of dress and some other prominent religious practices. On many points they have explicitly expressed their ignorance of the facts and limitations of their understanding. Regarding the practice of abstinence from smoking tobacco among the Sikhs, Polier says, "They abhor smoking of tobacco, for what reason I cannot find..."¹⁴¹ Wilkins describing the belief in future life among the Sikhs relates, "That there will be day of retribution, when virtue will be rewarded and vice punished (I forgot to ask in what manner)..."¹⁴² Malcolm expressing his ignorance of the Sikh mode of prayer says, "With the exact mode in which Nanac instructed his followers to address their prayers to that Supreme Being who he taught them to adore. I am not acquainted."¹⁴³ Trumpp also has made a mention of the difficulties involved in the proper grasping of the Sikh religion and the possible limitations of his own venture. He submits, "That in many passages, even after all the trouble I have taken, my translation may partly prove deficient, I fully allow, and in a first attempt on such a vast field, which has hitherto hardly been touched, this will appear natural enough to any man, who is conversant with the peculiar difficulties of such an undertaking."¹⁴⁴ Macauliffe after giving details of the linguistic and other difficulties involved in the proper understanding and interpretation of the Sikh scriptures reaches at the conclusion, "The Granth Sahib thus becomes probably the most difficult work, sacred or profane, that exists and hence the general ignorance of its contents." In the preface Macauliffe further claims "that a work of this nature cannot be accomplished again. In any age it could not be done out of India for want of expert assistance. In India, even under the most favourable conditions, and when a student had acquired a knowledge of some Indian

141. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 63.

142. Wilkins, *Asiatic Researches*, p. 74.

143. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 135-36.

144. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. VII (Preface).

languages and dialects, the translation of the sacred books of the Sikhs, and the compilation of the lives of their Gurus and holy men, would be the work of years."¹⁴⁵

These above mentioned views and confessions of the Western authors sufficiently explain the reasons for their inability to undertake the detailed description of the Sikh beliefs and practices. In spite of these problems the Western writers of earlier period have endeavoured to delineate some of the characteristic Sikh beliefs and practices in their writings. They have emphasized more on those prominent aspects that attract the attention of an observer at the first encounter with the faith. All these difficulties notwithstanding, their descriptions are interesting as well as revealing. With the passage of time as more and more information became accessible to these writers their interpretations and descriptions became more and more detailed and ordered. We have already noticed that only a limited number of Western writers have endeavoured to offer full length and systematic accounts of the Sikh beliefs and practices and the remaining were contented with mentioning only few conspicuous aspects of the faith. We shall here take only a brief note of writers of the latter category and focus mainly on those who have striven to present patterned and systematic accounts of the Sikh beliefs and practices.

ELUCIDATION OF THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The central place of the Guru among the Sikhs was noticed by Jesuit Father Jerome Xavier, as early as in the beginning of the seventeenth century. In a letter having bearing on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, he writes, "When the Prince (Khusru) was flying from Agra he passed through a place where was living a man who they call Guru of the gentiles, as amongst us the Bishop and pope, of theirs. He was held as a saint and venerated as their universal head, and the Prince went to meet him."¹⁴⁶ Polier too has taken notice of the importance and the role of the Guru among the Sikhs and also their practice of

145. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, pp. VI-VII, XXXIII, (Preface).

146. Father, Jerome Xavier, S.J. as quoted by E.R. Hambye, S.J., 'A Contemporary Jesuit Document on Guru Arjan Dev's Martyrdom', *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh* (ed.), p. 115.

repeating the name, rejection of certain conspicuous Hindu beliefs and practices, initiation ceremony, etc. But because of his own bias against the Sikhs and the doubtful nature of his sources, he has mostly misrepresented the beliefs and practices which he has striven to explain. The Sikhs do not pay any respects to the idols nor their practice of repeating name makes them atheists. The initiation among the Sikhs is not performed with the water in which the feet of those present were washed and neither there was any practice of steeping in tusks, bones or adding blood of boar in the *Amrit* for initiation of the Muslims. We have the following account of the Sikh beliefs and practices offered by Polier in his paper on the Sikhs, "The sect of the Siques has a strong taint of the Gentoo religion: they venerate the cow, and abstain piously from killing or feeding on it, and they also pay some respect to the *devtas* or idols. But their great object of worship is with them their own saints or those whom they have honoured with the name of *Gorou*. Those they invoke continually, and they seem to look on them as everything. *Wah-Gorou* repeated several times is their only symbol, from which the Musulmen have (not without reason) taxed them with being downright atheists. Their mode of initiating their converts is by making them drink out of a pan in which the feet of those present have been washed, meaning by that, I presume, to abolish all those distinctions of caste which so much encumber the Gentoos; they also steep in it, particularly for a Musulman, the tusks or bones of a boar and add some of the blood of that animal to it. This with repeating the symbol to *Wah-Gorou*, bearing an iron bracelet on one arm and letting the hair of the head and beard grow, forms the whole mystery of their religion, if such a filthy, beastly ceremony can be dignified with the name. They have also started pilgrimage both to the Ganges and their famous tank at *Ambarsar* where at fixed times they wash and perform some trifling ceremonies, invoking at the same time their *Gorou*."¹⁴⁷

In Browne's account we find only a brief comment on the relation of Sikhism to Hinduism and the nature of its principles and practices. Commenting on these aspects as quoted earlier,

147. Polier, 'The Siques', c.f. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 63-64.

he states, "The doctrine on which their sect is founded was introduced by *Gooroo Nanak*, about two hundred and fifty years ago and appears to bear that kind of relation to the Hindoo religion, which the protestant does to the Romish, retaining all the essential principles, but being abridged of most of its ceremonies, as well as the subordinate objects of veneration."¹⁴⁸

Browne's description of the Sikh initiation ceremony and their dress and symbols is relatively more objective and balanced than Polier. He explains, "In admitting a proselyte, they make him drink *sherbet* out of a large cup, with certain ceremonies..., and which are designed to signify that every distinction is abolished, except that of being a Sikh, even a Mussulman may become a Sikh on these conditions. From the time that he is admitted into the fraternity, he wears a steel ring around one of his wrists, lets his hair and beard grow to full length, and call on the name of Gooroo in confirmation of all engagements."¹⁴⁹ However, his information that Guru Gobind Singh performed the worship of goddess in expectation that some manifestation of the Divine pleasure would appear in his favour,¹⁵⁰ is based on erroneous sources. Wilkins has given us a detailed account of the daily Sikh prayer which he attended on one of the occasions at Patna Sahib, the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh. His description is wholly objective and sympathetic. All that he could gather about the teachings of the Sikh Gurus contained in the *Adi Granth* he relates as follows: "That this book...teaches that there is but one God, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, filling all space and pervading all matter; and that He is to be worshipped and invoked. That there will be a day of retribution, when virtue will be rewarded and vice punished (I forgot to ask in what manner); that it not only commands universal toleration, but forbids murder, theft, and such other deeds as are, by the majority of the mankind, esteemed crimes against society; and inculcates the practice of all the virtues, but particularly universal philanthropy and a general hospitality to strangers and travellers."¹⁵¹

Wilkins description of the ceremony for admitting a

148. Browne, *India Tracts*, pp. 13-14.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

150. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

151. Wilkins, *Asiatic Researches*, p. 74.

proselyte lacks in many important details but it is sufficiently equipped to refute the incorrect views of Polier held in regard to that ceremony. Describing the ceremony he relates, "A person having shown a sincere inclination to renounce his former opinions, to any five or more *Seeks* assembled together, in any place, as well on the highway as in a house of worship, they send to first shop where sweetmeats are sold and procure a small quantity of a particular sort which is very common, and as I recollect, they call it *Batāsā*, and having diluted it in pure water, they sprinkle some of it on the body, and into the eyes of the convert, whilst one of the best instructed repeats to him in any languages with which he is conversant the chief cannons of their faith, exacting from him a solemn promise to abide by them the rest of his life."¹⁵²

Forster writing of the implications of the initiation ceremony of the Sikhs maintains, "The article indeed of the admission of proselytes amongst the *Sicques*, has caused an essential deviation from the Hindoo system, and apparently levelled those barriers which were constructed by *Brimha*, for the arrangement of the different ranks and professions of his people."¹⁵³ Elaborating the mode and object of the Sikh worship Forster reports, "The tenets of *Nanock* forbid the worship of images, and ordain that the places of public prayer shall be of plain construction, and devoid of every exhibition of figure. A book entitled the *Grunth*, which contains the civil and religious institutes of *Nanock*, is the only topical object which the *Siques* have admitted into their places of worship. Instead of the intermediation of subordinate deities, they are directed to address their prayer to one God, who, without the aid of any delegate, is to be considered the unassociated ruler of the universe."¹⁵⁴

Malcolm's account of the Sikh beliefs and practices is far more detailed and profound than any of the earlier Western authors. He is the first Western author to have quoted lengthy passages from the primary Sikh sources such as the *Ādi Granth*, the *Vārs* of *Bhai Gurdas*, the *Dasam Granth*, the *Rahitnāmā*, etc., in support of his views. His elucidation of the Sikh beliefs

152. Wilkins, *Asiatic Researches*, p. 74.

153. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 294.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

and practices is relatively objective and sympathetic. He has made efforts to specify those abstract assertions, made by the Western writers concerning the Sikhs on the basis of his knowledge of the Sikh sources and traditions. He has striven hard to present Sikhism as an attempt to reform and reconcile the prevailing warring religions of Islam and Hinduism. Almost all important aspects of Sikhism have been touched upon in his work but the presentation lacks in systematization. He is the first Western writer to have noticed the Sikh beliefs in metempsychosis, sin, heaven and hell, practice of Name, charity, ablutions, emphasis on ethical virtues, etc. However, his work is not totally free from misrepresentations. He has failed to grasp the evolution and growth of the Sikh community in its proper perspective. He has also failed to relate properly the innovations and institutions established by Guru Gobind Singh with the ideals and mission of Guru Nanak. His presentation of the ideals and mission of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh creates an impression as if he is describing two parallel streams of religious thoughts. His information that Guru Gobind Singh was a devotee of goddess Durga, that he adopted the dress of Khālāsā as a mark of respect for the goddess, that the *Dasam Granth* is written in praise of Durga and that he depended on the emotional weapon of fanaticism to awaken and organise his community to rise against the Muslims, etc., is not based on the facts. But these misrepresentations do not seem to be schemed. Some *Nirmala* and *Udāsī* Sikhs have been entertaining such views about Guru Gobind Singh under the influence of Hinduism. In spite of these limitations, Malcolm's interpretation of the Sikh religion influenced the course of Western understanding of Sikhism for considerable period of time.

For want of space we cannot quote texts on all the points mentioned here. Those interested can look for this information in the third chapter of his book. The following quotations would amply demonstrate his views concerning the Sikh beliefs and practices including the transformation affected by Guru Gobind Singh. With respect to the ideas and mission of Guru Nanak, Malcolm as cited earlier, maintains, "We meet with a creed of pure deism grounded on the most sublime general truths, blended with the belief of all the absurdities of the Hindu

mythology and the fables of Muhammadanism, for Nanac professed a desire to reform, not to destroy the religion of the tribe in which he was born; and actuated by the great and benevolent design of reconciling the Jarring faiths of Brahma and Muhammad, he endeavoured to conciliate both Hindus and Moslems to his doctrine, by persuading them to reject those parts of their respective beliefs and usages, which he contended, were unworthy of God whom they both adopted. He called upon the Hindus to abandon the worship of idols and to return to the pure devotion of the Deity, in which their religion originated. He called upon the Muhammadans to abstain from practices like the slaughter of cows that were offensive to the religion of the Hindus, and to cease from the persecution of that race... Nanac endeavoured, with all the power of his own genius, aided by such authorities to impress both Hindus and Muhammadans with a love of toleration and an abhorrence of war; and his life was as peaceable as his doctrine."¹⁵⁵ He continues further, "As Nanak made no material of either the civil or religious usages of the Hindus, and his only desire was to restore a nation who had degenerated from their original pure worship into idolatry, he may be considered more in the light of a reformer than of a subverter of the Hindu religion; and these Sikhs who adhere to his tenets, without admitting those of Guru Govind, are hardly to be distinguished from the great mass of Hindu population; among whom there are many sects who differ, much more than that of Nanac, from the general and orthodox worship at present established in India."¹⁵⁶

Regarding the transformation brought about as a result of the innovations and institutes, established by Guru Gobind Singh, he maintains, "Though Guru Gobind mixes, even more than Nanac, the mythology of the Hindus with his own tenets; though his desire to conciliate them, in opposition to the Muhammadans, against whom he always breathed war and destruction, led him to worship at Hindu sacred shrines; and though the peculiar customs and dress among his followers, are stated to have been adopted from veneration to the Hindu

155. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs: Their Origin, Customs and Manners*, pp. 116-118.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

goddess of courage Durga Bhavani; yet it is impossible to concile the religion and usages, which Govind has established with the belief of the Hindus. It does not like that of Nanac question some favourite dogmas of the disciples of Brahma, and attack that worship of idols, which few of these defend, except upon the ground of these figures before which they bend being symbolical representations of the attributes of an all powerful Divinity; but it proceeds at one to subvert the foundation of the whole system. Wherever the religion of Guru Govind prevails, the institutions of Brahma must fall. The admission of proselytes, the abolition of the distinctions of caste, the eating of all kinds of flesh except that of cows, the form of religious worship, and the general devotion of all Singhs to arms are ordinances altogether irreconcilable with Hindu mythology, and have rendered the religion of the Sikhs as obnoxious to the Brahmens, and higher tribes of the Hindus as it is popular with the lower orders of that numerous class of mankind."¹⁵⁷

From the above two quotations one can easily make out that the transformation in Sikhism did not happen the same way as is depicted by the author. It was Guru Nanak who admitted proselytes from all the traditional ranks of the Hindu society and even from among the Muslims, and who strongly denounced the distinctions based on the caste system. Guru Gobind Singh did not worship at the Hindu shrines to conciliate Hindus nor did he breathe war and destruction against the Muslims.

Concerning the recitation of *Nām* and the cultivation and practice of moral virtues in Sikhism, he states, "Their prescribed forms of prayer are, I believe few and simple. Part of the writings of Nanac, which have since been incorporated with those of his successors, in the *Ādi Granth* are read, or rather recited, upon every solemn occasion. These are all in praise of the Deity, of religion and of virtue; and against impiety and immorality."¹⁵⁸

Ward has expressed his great debt to Malcolm,¹⁵⁹ for his own 'Account of the Sikhs'. However, he does not simply restate the findings of Malcolm but has attempted to supplement and

157. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

158. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

159. Ward, *The Hindoos*, pp. 342, 344.

elaborate these findings by his own individual efforts and on the basis of the original Sikh sources. So far as the Sikh doctrines and practices are concerned, Ward's account is relatively more definite and unambiguous than Malcolm. In it he had the assistance of a learned Sikh employed in the Serampore printing office,¹⁶⁰ of which Ward was a manager.

Ward's account is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a brief historical survey of Sikhism and a general outline of the Sikh beliefs and practices. The second part consists of translations of the selected passages from the Japuji of Guru Nanak and the selected compositions of the latter Gurus relating mainly to the Sikh doctrines referred to in the first part. His questions and the organization of the material explicitly manifest his Christian theological perspective.

Ward in his general comment on Guru Nanak has very appropriately distinguished the characteristic features of the Sikh belief-system. He says, "Nanuku appears to have resembled Choitunyu, and many other Hindoos who have been celebrated for their attachment to forms of devotion, in preference to barren speculations and religious shows."¹⁶¹ Some of the Sikh religious practices to find mention in Ward's work are seeking the company of holy persons, loving attachment to God, repetition of the name of God, rejection of the idol worship and the ceremonies connected with it, practice of the ethical virtues, reverence for the sacred compositions of the Sikh Gurus, etc. Two points most insisted upon among the Sikhs according to the author are, "devout attachment to the deity, and a harmless behaviour towards all creatures."¹⁶² Explaining the Sikh form of worship he says that in the compositions of Guru Nanak, "repeating the names of God is enjoined on the Shikhs."¹⁶³ In this respect he further states, "There are three things which these works particularly commends, as, a disposition to serve Narayunu;—devotion, expressed in repeating the names of Narayunu, in meditating on these names, and in praising Narayunu;—and union with devout persons."¹⁶⁴

160. Ward, *The Hindoos*, p. 342.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Ibid.*

164. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

Elucidating the Sikh belief in transmigration and future life propagated in the Sikh scriptures he relates, "They advise Shikhs to seek absorption in God, rather than the happiness enjoyed in inferior heavens, from whence the soul descends to enter on a succession of births. The performance of the ceremonies prescribed in their books, is the Shikh way to final beatitude. These books further teach that the sorrows experienced in the different transmigrations of the soul, are the fruit of sin; that as long as the soul is confined in the body; it is in chains; and that whether the chains be of gold or of iron, it is still a prisoner, and enduring punishments. They also believe in the existence of the Hindoo king of death, Yumu, and in the punishments he inflicts."¹⁶⁵

Ward repeats the same erroneous views about the worship of Durga by Guru Gobind Singh as held by Malcolm.¹⁶⁶ He gives a detailed account of the Sikh initiation ceremony on the lines of Malcolm but adds, "Women are made Shikhs in the same manners as men; the only difference in the form is that when the nectar is prepared for women, it is stirred with the back, instead of the edge of the knife."¹⁶⁷ This last mentioned practice with respect to women does not have any theoretical basis in Sikhism, as the *Khandā* (double-edged sword) with which the *Amrit* is prepared does not have any back side. Ward's account also consists of brief information on Sikh ceremonies of birth, marriage and death, place of worship, indigenous educational institutions, Sikh attitude towards caste system and prescriptions and proscriptions in the matter of food. Ward's account of the Sikhs, alongwith Malcolm's sketch, provides useful information about the religious doctrines and usages of the Sikhs but it has not attracted the attention of the scholars that is due to it.

History and not theology was the primary concern with Cunningham. His main endeavour in his own words, "was to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity by showing its connexion with the different creeds of India, by exhibiting it as a natural and important result of the Muhammadan conquest..."¹⁶⁸ The Sikh religious beliefs and

165. *Ibid.*

166. *Ibid.*

167. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

168. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. XX (Preface).

practices have been mentioned here but they mainly form part of his historical narration. Sikhism in this standard work has been represented as the culmination of the medieval Indian religious and social reformatory efforts. The positive elements of earlier efforts find place in Sikhism but they have been remoulded and reworked by the inventive genius of Guru Nanak, in order to make them more definite and practicable.

Describing Guru Nanak's system in relation to the earlier reforms he maintains, "Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality, and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kabir had denounced images, and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vallabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these good and able men appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life, that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition to be unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at emancipation from preistcraft, or from the grossness of idolatry and polytheism. They formed pious associations of contented Quietists, or they gave themselves upto the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss, rather than called upon their fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel, and to arise a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their sects remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal to the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."¹⁶⁹

Dwelling briefly upon the basic principles and primary emphases made by Guru Nanak, Cunningham enunciates, "He addresses equally the Mulla and the Pandit, the Dervish and the Sannyasi, and tells them to remember that Lord of Lords Who has seen come and go numberless Muhammads, and Vishnus, and Sivas. He tells them that virtues and charities, heroic acts and gathered wisdom are nought of themselves, that

the only knowledge which availeth is the knowledge of God; and then, as if to rebuke those vain men who saw eternal life in their own act of faith, he declares that they only can find the Lord on whom the Lord looks with favour. Yet the extension of grace is linked with the exercise of our will and the beneficent use of our faculties. God said Nanak, places salvation in good works and uprightness of conduct; the Lord will ask of man, "What has he done?—and the teacher further required timely repentance of men saying, "If not until the day of reckoning the sinner abaseth himself, punishment shall overtake him."¹⁷⁰

Elaborating further some of the fundamental ideas of Sikhism and their Indian philosophical background he maintains, "Nanak adopted the philosophical system of his countrymen, and regarded bliss as the dwelling of the soul with God after its punitive transmigrations should have ceased. Life, he says, is as the shadow of the passing bird, but the soul of man is, as the potter's wheel, ever circling on its pivot. He makes the same uses of the current language or notions of the time on other subjects, and thus says, he who remains bright amid darkness (*Anjan*), unmoved amid deceit (*Māyā*), that is, perfect amid temptation, should attain happiness. But it would be idle to suppose that he speculated upon being or upon the material world, after the manner of Plato or Vyasa; and it would be unreasonable to condemn him because he preferred the doctrine of a succession of habiliments, and the possible purification of the most sinful soul, to the resurrection of the same body, and the pains of everlasting fire."¹⁷¹ Summing up the Sikh practices he says, "Thus Nanak extricated his followers from the accumulated errors of ages, and enjoined upon them devotion of thought and excellence of conduct as the first duties."¹⁷²

Cunningham has traced the whole development of Sikhism in a very precise and comprehensive manner. Nothing important has escaped his discerning eye. His conclusions are most profound and balanced. Although his work was written almost one and a half century ago it still commands respect

170. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

171. *Ibid.*

172. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

as a standard work. After establishing the institution of the Khālsā, Cunningham represents Guru Gobind Singh as giving the following outline of the faith: "A new faith had been declared, and henceforth the 'Khālsā', the saved or liberated, should alone prevail. God must be worshipped in truthfulness and sincerity, but no material resemblance must degrade the Omnipotent; the Lord could only be beheld by the eye of faith in the general body of the Khālsā. All he said, must become as one; the lowest were equal with the highest; caste must be forgotten; they must accept the *pabul* or initiation from him, and the four races must eat as one out of one vessel. The Turks must be destroyed, and the graves of those called saints neglected. The ways of the Hindus must be abandoned their temples viewed as holy and their rivers looked upon as sacred; the Brahman's thread must be broken; by means of the Khālsā alone could salvation be attained. They must surrender themselves wholly to their faith and to him their guide. Their words must be 'Kritnāsh, Kulnāsh, Dharmnāsh, Karmnāsh' the forsaking of occupation and family of belief and ceremonies. 'Do this' said Gobind, 'and the world is yours'.¹⁷³ Almost all the conclusions of Cunningham are based on the authentic sources of Sikhism, and he refers to them extensively with his own comments in the footnotes. Thus the erudite scholar has not only provided us an exhaustive review of the earlier studies of the Sikh beliefs and practices but also has added depth and dimension to the available information, through very deep and penetrating comments, and by relating it to the process of historical interaction and historical development.

Wilson and Cust two other noteworthy authors of this period have not made any attempt to expound the doctrines and practices of the Sikhs. In respect of this aspect of Sikhism, they were contented to receive what had been offered by the earlier authors. Trumpp is the first Western writer who has made an original effort to furnish an integrated and systematic sketch of the Sikh theology.

We have already explained in detail about the personal attitude of Trumpp towards Sikhism and the nature of his interpretation. In this context when we refer to his 'Sketch of

173. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 63-64.

the Religion of the Sikhs', as systematic only theological organisation of the material is meant by it, otherwise, his whole effort is oriented to trace the logical contradictions of the Sikh belief-system. His discussion of the Sikh religion opens with an analysis of the Sikh doctrine of God. Having described the Sikh idea of God he discusses all the other ideas in relation to this basic doctrine.

The first question which he takes up to elucidate is the relation of man to the Supreme. In regard to this relation he maintains the basic identity of the human soul with the Divine light. Elaborating the basic problem of human life and its goal in the light of the above relation he states, "It is the aim and object of the individual soul as a divine spark to be reunited with the fountain of light, from which it has emanated, and to be reabsorbed in it. As long as it has not reached this goal, it is unhappy, being separated from its source, the Supreme." He goes on to explain, "Why the soul has emanated and what for, is nowhere stated in the Granth; we must therefore look also on this process as a sport of the Absolute. But the return of the individual soul to the eternal fountain of light is cut off in consequence of works practised whilst in the body, and by its impurity, contracted by second love or duality which subject the soul to be metempsychosis, the coming and going."¹⁷⁴ Tracing the causes responsible for the fall of the individual soul into impurity or sin he emphatically maintains that Sikhism teaches the belief in destiny. The origin of impurity or sin, therefore, is to be traced to the Absolute Being itself.¹⁷⁵ In addition to the above belief, man's actions are conditioned by the operation of the Three *gunas* of goodness, passion and darkness and he is also under the delusion of *māyā*. The whole process leads to death and repeated births. Trumpp says, "Under the influence of the qualities and the delusion of the *Māyā* man commits acts which subject the soul to transmigration."¹⁷⁶

He further briefly dwells on the Hindu (so likewise the Sikh as he does not distinguish between the two) notions of the reward and punishment for the actions done, heaven and

174. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. CIL.

175. *Ibid.*, p. CIII.

176. *Ibid.*, p. CIV.

hell, transmigration through the eighty-four lacks of forms of existence and rarity of the human birth as the final emancipation can only be worked out in this life. The discussion leads him to conclude, "that this whole system is contradictory to itself; for on the one hand it is asserted that the lot of every man is written from the beginning on his forehead, that he acts under the influence of the three qualities, and is in addition deluded by the *Māyā* into error, and on the other hand he is made accountable for his works and rewarded or punished accordingly, and after all subject to the trouble of transmigrations."¹⁷⁷

In his interpretation the final goal of human life is conceived in negative terms. He explains, "The transmigration of the soul, which has in India so firmly and universally laid hold of the popular mind, appears to the Hindu (and so likewise to the Sikh) the greatest evils, and the question, which occupies all the thoughts of his mind, is, how to be freed from it? His aim is not heaven nor paradise, for he is not allowed to remain there for ever; his aim is as held out to him by the Bhagats and their followers, the Sikh Gurus, the total dissolution of individual existence by the reabsorption of the soul in the fountain of light. His aim is in one word, the *Nirban*, the total cessation of individual consciousness and reunion with the vacuum."¹⁷⁸

His negative conception of *Nirvāna* is based on his belief that Sikhism does not conceive a personal God. He explains, where no personal God is conceived or believed in, man cannot aspire to a final personal communion with Him, his aim can only be absorption in the Absolute substance, i.e. individual annihilation. We find therefore no allusion to the joys of a future life in the Granth, as heaven or paradise, though supposed to exist, is not considered a desirable object. The immortality of the soul is only taught so far as the doctrine of transmigration requires it; but when the soul has reached its highest object, it is no more mentioned, because it is no longer exists as individual soul.¹⁷⁹

Trumpp has further attributed pessimism to the Sikh idea

177. *Ibid.*, p. CV.

178. *Ibid.*, pp. CV-CVI.

179. *Ibid.*, p. CVI.

of liberation, and to the learned author the Sikh idea of *Nirvāṇa* is the same as held in Buddhism. He says, "Buddhism is, therefore, in reality, like Sikhism, nothing but unrestricted pessimism, unable to hold out to man any solace, except that of annihilation."¹⁸⁰ Explaining the ethical implications of the above mentioned belief attributed to Sikhism, Trumpp remarks, "In a religion where the highest object of life is the extinction of individual existence, there can be no room for a system of moral duties; we need therefore hardly point out, how wrong the statement of some authors is, that Sikhism is a *moralizing Deism*."¹⁸¹

The Western scholars following Trumpp have made sustained efforts to refute all these erroneously held views of the author concerning the Sikh belief-system. We, therefore, are not required to undertake the same exercise here.

Among the various means suggested by Sikh Gurus for the realisation of the final goal of human life, Trumpp has made special mention of the practice of the repeating the name of God, the need for the guidance and favour of the Guru, the company of the holy persons, conquest of evil dispositions of human mind such as lust, wrath, greediness, infatuation or spiritual blindness and egotism, practising of charity, ablutions, leading a household life and disregarding the practice of inequality based on caste, etc.¹⁸²

Trumpp has also given an account of the ordinance and injunctions laid down in the *rebitnāmā* (the Sikh texts of Code of conduct), for regulating the religious and social behaviour of the Sikhs.¹⁸³ Concerning these detailed rules of conduct, Trumpp maintains, "We see from these minute ordinances, that the Sikh reformatory movement soon ended again in a new bondage, which was quite as tiresome as that which they had thrown off."¹⁸⁴

Trumpp thus is the first Western scholar who in addition to translating the substantial portions of the *Ādi Granth* has also endeavoured to provide an outline of the Sikh theology on the

180. Trumpp, *Ādi Granth*, p. CVI (Introduction).

181. *Ibid.*, pp. CIX-CX.

182. *Ibid.*, pp. CVI-CXII.

183. *Ibid.*, pp. CXIII-CXVI.

184. *Ibid.*, p. CXVI.

pattern of the Christian theology. In this sketch of the basic Sikh beliefs have not only been mentioned but have been elaborated on the basis of scriptural evidence and rationally examined. However, the main contribution of the author, in this respect, consists not in resolving issues but in raising controversies.

Regarding his contribution Barrier, cited earlier says, "Trumpp made an inadvertent albeit negative contribution to Sikh studies in that he provided a controversial and much discussed overview with stress on the Hindu character of Sikhism. Trumpp's book gradually became seen as a historical statement that had to be confronted and proven wrong."¹⁸⁵ Stephen Dunning has identified 'six questions' which may be considered as the contribution of Trumpp to the Sikh studies. The questions are as follows: "(1) In what way, if any, is Sikh theology 'Pantheistic?' (2) Does Sikhism teach the 'reabsorption' of the individual soul into the Absolute? (3) How do Sikhs reconcile the ethical responsibility of (free) man with the will of an omnipotent God on the one hand and the theory of transmigration (and the karmic law upon which it is based) on the other? (4) What is the Sikh understanding of the Guru? (5) What are the substance and general purpose of Sikh moral injunctions? and (6) to what extent did the nine 'successor' Gurus and especially Guru Gobind Singh develop or alter the teachings of Guru Nanak?"¹⁸⁶ These and many other related questions were Trumpp's gift to the Sikh scholars.

Soon after the publication of Trumpp's translation of the *Ādi Granth*, systematic efforts started to refute and rectify his misconstrued ideas, about the Sikh belief-system. Pincott perhaps was the first Western scholar to have taken the challenge of Trumpp. He devoted a very lengthy and well documented paper to refute Trumpp's contention on Guru Nanak's relation with the Muslims. Pincott perhaps was not sufficiently equipped to re-examine Trumpp's interpretation of the other aspects of Sikhism. On the Sikh idea of God he disagrees with Trumpp but not much and that too on the level of generalizations. Elaborating the implications of the idea of God he writes, "Such was Nanak's idea of the Creator and

185. Barrier, 'Trumpp and Macauliffe: Western Students of Sikh History and Religion', *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs* (ed.), p. 172.

186. Stephen Dunning, *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, p. 7.

Sustainer of the phenomenal world and it was a conception which at once abrogated all petty disfunctions of creed, and sect, and dogma, and ceremony. The realization of such a God shatters the sophistries of the theologians and the quibblings of the dialectician; it clears the brow from the gloom of obtruse pondering over trifles, and leaves the heart free for the exercise of human sympathies. And if the grand ideas of the Incomprehensible unity, which could be only named and adored, levelled all distinctions of creed and caste, so did the great truth of the Brotherhood of Man sweep away the barriers of nation, tribe and station. Nanak taught that all men are equal before God; that there is no high, no low, no dark, no fair, no privileged, no outcaste; all are equal both in race and in creed in political rights and in religious aspirations.¹⁸⁷ However, on the Sikh ideas of human life, bondage and ultimate goal of life he repeats almost the same ideas as held by Trumpp.¹⁸⁸

Gordon who provided us with a very general but sympathetic account of the Sikhs, agrees more with Malcolm and Cunningham than Trumpp, with regard to the religious ideas of Sikhism. He regards Sikhism as "pure monotheism" which teaches belief in a "personal God."¹⁸⁹ Concerning the Sikh emphasis on household life he explains, "Nanak ever enjoined his disciples to remain in their secular occupations and not to leave the world that their religion was one of common life. He taught that the state of a householder was equally acceptable to God as retirement from world; that salvation did not depend on outward circumstances, or in the performance of austerities, but on the inward state of mind, which even in the daily business of life may remain absorbed in meditation on God. The evil practices of mendicant fakirs as well as the superstitions of the Brahman, priesthood are frequently exposed in the 'Granth' and severely censured."¹⁹⁰ On the other points also Gordon does not accept the misconceived views of Trumpp.

Of all the writings that have emerged as a reaction to Trumpp's misrepresentation of the Sikh faith and tradition, Macauliffe's is the most massive and voluminous. He was not

187. Pincott, 'Sikhism', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 74.

188. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

189. John. J.H. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 185.

190. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

only contented to refute some of the erroneously held views of Trumpp, but set to work to supplant it. After two decades of continuous and sustained efforts he succeeded in accomplishing this ponderous task. Since the publication of *The Sikh Religion* eight decades ago the work still remains as the most authoritative translation of the Sikh scriptures and a representative of the traditional interpretation of Sikhism. Elucidating his contribution to the Sikh studies in this regard Harbans Singh maintains, "Historically, Macauliffe's translation is very important; it, for the first time, recorded the interpretation of the sacred texts as orally communicated by *giānis* from generation to generation. It thus preserves a valuable tradition and has become a crucial key to the understanding of the scriptures."¹⁹¹ Although it was one of the explicit aims of Macauliffe to "remove the ridicule and contempt which Trumpp has brouhgt on Sikhism."¹⁹² and to "make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which he offered to their Gurus and their religion,"¹⁹³ yet, excepting in one paper,¹⁹⁴ he did not busy himself in a negative exercise of refuting Trumpp's incorrect views. Instead, he adopted a very noble and arduous method to accomplish his aim and endeavoured to elaborate the correct interpretation of Sikhism as would also be acceptable to the Sikhs. The outcome was a very detailed and correct version of the Sikh religion, which immediately replaced Trumpp's work on the whole.

Macauliffe's major work consists of translation of the selected compositions from the *Ādi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* and the life history of the Sikh Gurus and the Bhagats based on the traditional Sikh sources. In his several papers and an introductory essay to the first volume of *The Sikh Religion*, his approach is more descriptive than analytical. In these essays he does not make any effort to present systematic account of the Sikh beliefs, as Trumpp has offered. It is only on a few key Sikh ideas such as God, Nirvan, Ethics, etc., that we find

191. Harbans Singh, 'English Translation of Sikh Scriptures', *The Sikh Courier*, Spring 1967, p. 6.

192. Macauliffe, *The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*, p. 6.

193. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. VIII (Preface).

194. Macauliffe, 'The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs' (Reprinted from *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, October, 1910).

his views expressed in these essays and in them he disagrees from the meanings attributed to these key concepts by Trumpp in his analysis.

We have already noticed his views on the Sikh idea of God. With respect to the Sikh emphasis on ethical life he states, "Sikhism prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concrementation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimage to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest Christians. It would be difficult to point to a more comprehensive ethical code."¹⁹⁵ Comparing Sikh beliefs with Christianity he maintains, "Sikhism mainly differs from Christianity in that it inculcates the transmigration of the soul, and an ampler belief in destiny than is perhaps compatible with great success in civil life. It however affords a means of extrication from the toils of fate. Destiny written on the forehead is compared to the reversed letters of a seal. When men make obeisance to a spiritual guide, the letters assume their ordinary appearance, and man is regenerated and put on the road to emancipation."¹⁹⁶

Commenting on the Sikh doctrine of *Nirvāṇ*, Macauliffe says, "In, the hymns of the Gurus, *Nirvāṇ*, or absorption in God, is proposed as the supreme object of human attainment; but a paradise called *Ṣach Khand* is also promised to the blest. There they recognise one another and enjoy everlasting beatitude. Several learned Sikhs, however maintain that Nirvan and Sach Khand are particularly the same."¹⁹⁷ He further explains, "Nirvan, from *nir*'out' and *va*'to blow', means in Sikh literature the cessation of individual consciousness caused by the blending of the light of the soul with the light of God."¹⁹⁸ Elucidating the Sikh way of obtaining Nirvan, he states, "Nirvan is to be obtained by meditation on God, with sufficient attention and interation, and by a life spent in conformity with the Guru's teachings. Individual consciousness then ceases, and there is

195. Macauliffe, 'The Sikh Religion', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, p. 25.

196. *Ibid.*

197. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. LXIV (Introduction).

198. *Ibid.*, p. LXV.

no further pain or misery."¹⁹⁹ Beyond these brief but decorous comments Macauliffe does not make any attempt to provide meticulous theological or philological analysis of the Sikh conceptual terms.

Dorothy Field has attempted to systematize the Sikh beliefs and practices on the basis of Macauliffe's massive work. Third chapter of her small book,²⁰⁰ is devoted to the doctrines of the Sikhs. Her interpretation of the Sikh doctrines is relatively more systematic and detailed than Macauliffe's. Explaining the Sikh concept of *Nirvāṇ* she says, "The all desirable condition of Nirvan has always been a subject for controversy among European scholars. The word comes from nir = out, and va = to blow, and the meaning has been somewhat differently interpreted even among Indians themselves. Speaking generally, it would be safe to say that it never meant annihilation, but rather absorption into the Absolute. Where the belief in a personal Deity is strong, Nirvana has stood for unity of the creature with the Creator, and thus in the Granth Sahib, it means the cessation of individual consciousness in the All-consciousness of God. Its realisation is compared to the blending of two streams."²⁰¹ Similarly on other beliefs also her views are relatively more ordered and comprehensive than Macauliffe's.

During this period several Western authors wrote about Sikhism as part of their detailed studies of the Indian religions. The names of Oman, Farquhar, Macnicol, Rose, Pratt, Carpenter, etc. may be mentioned in this context. All these authors were well versed in the Indian religious doctrines and practices. All of them have attempted to describe Sikhism in relation to the Indian religions in general and the medieval religious reform movements in particular. Their accounts of Sikhism are invariably based on the secondary sources and for that reason some of the incorrect views found in the earlier writings have come to be repeated. Farquhar who assumes that Guru Nanak is the disciple of Bhagat Kabir, has the following comment to offer about the general nature of Sikhism. "Nanak (1469-1538), the founder of the Sikh sect, was a disciple of the famous teacher Kabir. Except in two matters, his system is practically

199. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, p. LXV.

200. Dorothy Field, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, pp. 43-62.

201. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

identical with that of many other Vaishnava sects. It is a theism, and the main teachings of the founder is highly spiritual in character. Yet the whole Hindu pantheon is retained. The doctrine of transmigration and *karma* and the Indian social system remains unaltered. The Guru holds the great place, which he has in all the later Vaishnava and Saiva systems. He is not only a teacher but a saviour, and receives worship. The two points on which Kabir and Nanak were unlike earlier teachers were these; they condemned the whole doctrine of divine incarnations; and they never ceased to protest against idolatry, thus preventing their followers from using Hindu temples. On one other point the two men seem to have been agreed; they did not wish their followers to become ascetics, but advised them to go on with their ordinary avocations."²⁰² Guru Nanak as now has decisively been shown was not a disciple of Kabir,²⁰³ the concept of Guru in Sikhism is not the same as held in the Vaishnava and the Saiva sects, as the author himself holds that the Guru denounces the doctrine of incarnations, and Sikhism does not accept the Indian social system which is based on the theory of *Varnāśrama*.

Elucidating the nature of the Sikh religion, Pratt contends, "The teachings of Nanak which are of course the teachings of the Sikh religion today—are, therefore, quite similar to those of the Hindu bhakti schools. They differ rather in what they deny than in what they affirm. Nanak not only opposed the doctrine of incarnation; he refused to accept any of the sacred books—either Hindu or Moslem—as authoritative; he opposed asceticism and professional begging teaching his followers to earn their own living, to eat meat and live active lives; he would have nothing to do with caste distinctions and taught that all men were equal before God; and his constant endeavour was to make religion more simple, more inward, more spiritual."²⁰⁴ The originality of Sikhism does not consist in denying some of

202. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 336.

203. McLeod, 'Guru Nanak and Kabir' *Punjab History Conference Proceedings*, Nov. 12-14, 1965 (Punjabi University, Patiala), pp. 87-92; Bhai Jodh Singh, 'Bhagat Kabir was not the Guru of Guru Nanak Dev' (Punjabi), *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak* (ed. Ganda Singh) (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1969) pp. 58-61.

204. Pratt, *India and Its Faiths*, p. 245.

the characteristic beliefs and practices of the prevailing systems but in offering a more comprehensive and practical belief system as seen by Joseph Davey Cunningham and others.

Macnicol has devoted one full chapter of his book to the doctrines and practices of Sikhism.²⁰⁵ In his opinion, he is more inclined to accept Trumpp's position on the Sikh beliefs. Concerning the general nature of the Sikh theology he maintains, "The most we can say accordingly of the theology of Sikhism is that it is turned in the direction of the theism and that behind its worship of a single God who is personal looms up. The belief in Karma and transmigration was, however, retained by Nanak and is universally acknowledged by the adherents of the religion. When to this is added belief in *māyā* it is difficult to see how there can be room in the conceptions of this religion for the worship of a personal god in the sense in which this worship is usually understood." The author concludes, "it is impossible to reduce its doctrines to consistency."²⁰⁶

Rose, who was closely associated with the Sikhs during his service has given a very comprehensive account of the Sikh beliefs and practices entitled 'The Philosophy of Sikhism'.²⁰⁷ Explaining the Sikh practice of meditation he states, "In the first stage attention must be fixed on the personality of the Guru by reading his life and by constantly thinking of the attributes to be cultivated, afterwards, silent repetition of the name together with the understanding of the sense in the mind. By constant practice the name itself vanishes and the spirit makes itself manifest in the devotee's heart according to his conception." He continues, "Ultimately the individual soul enjoys perfect union with the Supreme Soul. In this stage the *bhagat* sees the One God within, without and everywhere and realises that : 'In Him he lives, moves and has his being'."²⁰⁸

205. Macnicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, pp. 272-279.

206. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276.

207. H.A. Rose (Compiler), *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (Patiala : Languages Department, Punjab, 1970), Vol. I, pp. 716-718. See also 'Sikhs' *Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1967) (First 1920), Vol. XI, pp. 507-511.

208. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 717-718.

From the foregoing representative views of these authors it may be safely assumed that they were acquainted with the general view of Sikhism. Their comments, because of their close familiarity with the Indian religions, were more precise and patterned. But these authors failed to notice the transformation that had occurred over the years in the meanings of these terms and attempted to interpret the Sikh conceptual words in terms of their traditional meanings.

After the publication of Macauliffe's voluminous works on Sikhism, no serious Western author came forward to carry the task of exploring Sikhism further at least for three decades. The troubled times, growing political uncertainty, because of the struggle of Indian people for independence, social and religious awakening among the Sikhs and their opposition to the Christian missionary activities may be mentioned as some of the reasons for the evaporating interest of the Western writers in Sikhism. During these years a few small hand books and brief accounts devoted to the Sikh history and religion appeared but they were primarily designed for the use of civil and military officials and did not intend to make any original contribution. However, some Sikh scholars educated on the Western lines devoted their efforts to explain their history and religion to the world. The names of Bhai Jodh Singh, Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, Sher Singh, etc., may be mentioned in this context. For the Sikh community it was a period of academic awakening and devotional resurgence.

In 1937, an American scholar J.C. Archer arrived in Punjab with the intention of exploring Sikhism from the comparative perspective. The results of his study of 'Sikhism in relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas' were published by the Princeton University in 1946. In this study the Sikh beliefs and practices are not to be found discussed at one place. Their analysis does not seem to form the basic concern of this study. The basic aim of the author is to relate the story of the development of the Sikh "communal consciousness"²⁰⁹ and to deduce lessons from it for the discipline of the comparative religion. The author repeatedly affirms, "The five centuries of

209. Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas : A Study in Comparative Religions*, p. 2.

Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value—often bearing quite directly, for example, upon the major problems of comparative religion.”²¹⁰ He further states, “this recital provides materials in illustration of the principles which operate or at least seem to operate during the interactions of any and all contiguous religions. At all events, the liberty is taken now and then as the story of the Sikhs unfolds of inquiring into the story’s meaning for the whole field of comparative religion.”²¹¹

However, in the second chapter, entitled ‘A Company of Pilgrims’, the author endeavours to portray the contemporary Sikh religious practices by following a group of pilgrims worshipping at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and Tarn Taran. The sixth chapter of the study named ‘Nanak’s Message and the Book of Psalms’²¹² is primarily devoted to elaborate the religious beliefs propagated by Guru Nanak including a literal translation of the Japuji. In this chapter the Sikh doctrines of God, Name, Karma, transmigration, Hukam, Bhakti, grace, etc. have very briefly been described. The author does not trouble to provide theological or philosophical analysis of these doctrines. He again turns to the Sikh theological doctrines in the final chapter of his study. All that he does here is to offer a brief summary of the Sikh ideas of God, man, ego, salvation, etc. as elaborated by Bhai Jodh Singh in his *Gurmat Nirney*.²¹³ Archer, thus, does not attempt to make a systematic study of the Sikh beliefs and practices. Stephen Dunning’s comment, referred earlier, may be repeated here: “Indeed, the two greatest failings of Archer’s study are his conviction that Sikhism has no real theology and his constant derogation of Sikh ethics.”²¹⁴

Because of his long association with the Sikhs, Loehlin’s description of the people and their religion is far more sympathetic and objective. He has written on almost all aspects of Sikhism, focussing in the main on their scriptures. In his description of the Sikh theology and practice, to which a separate chapter is devoted, he follows the same method as

210. *Ibid.*, p. V (Preface).

211. *Ibid.*, p. VI (Preface).

212. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-133.

213. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-315.

214. Stephen Dunning, *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, p. 13.

adopted by Archer, and gives abridged translations of a paper by Bhai Jodh Singh on Sikh theology, and a translation of the *Sikh Rabit Maryādā*, issued by the Sharomani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, on the Sikh practices.²¹⁵ But in his own independent comments based on his study of the Sikh scriptures he follows the same line of interpretation. "With regard to the teachings of the Granth", he maintains, "it is evident that a strictly logical system of teaching should not be expected in a book of mystical and rhapsodical hymns. Certain ideas emerge as dominant by virtue of much repetition, even when conflicting ideas may also occasionally be expressed. Hindu theology of the contemplative Bhakti type is accepted, with a loving personal God who offers salvation by grace to those who faithfully meditate on his name. But the Hindu religious practices are firmly rejected, such as the priesthood of the Brahmans, pilgrimages, the sacred thread of the high castes, asceticism, and especially idolatry. The teaching is tinged at times with Hindu pantheism and Hindu mythology, and it is often coloured with Muslim ideas of the absoluteness, not to say capriciousness, of Allah, alongwith fatalistic resignation to His absolute Will; but on the whole, ethical monotheism prevails."²¹⁶ The Sikh idea of Guru has been usually misrepresented in Western writings. Loehlin's description of the doctrine is relatively more close to the Sikh belief. He remarks, "The Sikhs do not regard the Guru as an incarnation of deity, but a human person supremely developed spiritually; and a Sikh who implicitly follows the Guru's instructions may even attain the same spiritual heights." Quoting Bhai Jodh Singh he goes on, "The Guru communicates his ideas through the word. Sikhism, therefore, believes that it is the word of the Guru that is Guru. Hence the tenth Guru said that after him the Guru Granth Sahib would be the Guru of the Panth. This makes the Sikhs pre-eminently a 'people of the Book'.²¹⁷ However, his special contribution to the Sikh studies is his attempt to elucidate Sikh ideas in relation to his own Christian ideas. In this respect his comparison of the Sikh doctrine of *Prasād*

215. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and their Scriptures*, pp. 42-52; *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, pp. 47-56.

216. Loehlin, *The Christian Approach to the Sikhs*, p. 43.

217. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

(grace) with the Christian doctrine of 'grace' will survive as a pioneering effort which opened up the way for the Sikh Christian dialogue.²¹⁸

The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib by Greenlees, along with Trumpp's *The Ādi Granth*, and Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* is to be regarded as a great achievement in the theological construction of the Sikh faith. In it he combines the characteristic excellence of both the earlier works. Like Trumpp's 'sketch', he adopts a well conceived theological pattern and like Macauliffe he lets the data speak for itself. The work is conceived in a very deep and living sympathy for the Sikh faith. The main aim of the author is not to make a rational examination of the claims of Sikh theology but to present the Sikh faith on the theological pattern. The learned author is deeply convinced that Sikhism, "is a practical way of life, leading man straight to his goal and does not involve itself in verbose theorising."²¹⁹

The first part of the book is devoted to outline the history of the 'Community of the Disciples' including the lives of the Gurus. In the second part he has endeavoured to offer fresh translation of the representative verses from the Sikh scriptures including complete translation of the Japuji. From chapter two to seven²²⁰ of the second part, the author's attempt has been to present an outline of the Sikh theology, developed on the basis of translations from the Sikh scriptures and elucidated further by author's own comments and also by citing parallel quotations from the world religious literature. The second chapter of this part, as we have already discussed, presents the Sikh idea of God. The third chapter entitled 'the mortal man', elaborates the Sikh ideas of the world, sin, bondage and liberation, death, judgement, hell, rebirth and the conquest of death. The fourth chapter aims at introducing the Sikh belief of Guru and the sixth the Sikh view of *Nām*. The seventh chapter called 'the way to God', portrays the Sikh spiritual disciplines and includes topics such as the need for the Guru, devotion, kindness and grace of God, prayer and faith, absolute commitment, company of the holy, love of God, etc. The

218. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures*, pp. 53-55.

219. Greenlees, *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. VII.

220. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-198.

seventh chapter endeavours to explain the Sikh ideal of liberation by the use of an image of bride's yearning for the beloved and the final bliss of union. The author has also offered brief independent accounts of the Sikh beliefs of the 'the Name of God', 'the way of the practice of Name' and 'the nature of Guru' on the basis of Sikh scholars such as Teja Singh and Sher Singh.²²¹ Thus, in addition to its independent importance 'as the best compendium of Sikhism',²²² the work provides a very significant link between the works of Trumpp and Macauliffe on the one hand and the work of McLeod on the other.

In our survey McLeod is the last of the Western writers on Sikh religion. In certain respects, such as his analysis of 'The Nature of Unregenerate Man' and 'the Divine Self-Expression', McLeod has made original contribution to the Sikh studies.²²³ It is most regrettable that in a study, such as the present one, it is not possible to go into the details of his analysis, beyond making certain comments of very general and abstract nature. It requires a full length study of McLeod's works on Sikhism, in order to do full justice to his contribution to the field. Even the Sikh scholars who are critical of McLeod's treatment of the *Janamsākhī* literature as a source of the Sikh history are appreciative of his analysis of the teachings of Guru Nanak.

McLeod's account of the teachings of Guru Nanak opens up with a brief description of the immediate religious background of Sikhism, which according to his assumption is 'The Sant Tradition of Northern India : the Nirguna Sampradya', including a minimal influence of Islam. The discussion of the Sikh theology is divided into four main sections, under the titles : 'The Nature of God', 'The Nature of Unregenerate Man', 'The Divine Self-Expression, and 'The Discipline'. The whole discussion revolves round the Sikh doctrine of God. The first section therefore delineates the Sikh doctrine of God, of which we have already taken a detailed notice. The second section treats of the nature of man separated from God. In the third section attempt has been made to determine the Sikh answer

221. *Ibid.*, pp. CLXIII-CLXXI.

222. Harbans Singh, 'Scholarly Study of Sikhism'. *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. II, No. I (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1970), p. 78.

223. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 177-207.

as how God communicates with man? In the fourth section the author has endeavoured to outline the Sikh spiritual path, leading to God, including explication of the Sikh belief of ultimate union.

In the second section McLeod strives to amplify the nature of unregenerate man as held in Sikhism by elucidating the Sikh understanding of the *man*, *haumai*, *māyā* etc. Dwelling upon the crucial significance of *man* in the belief system of Guru Nanak, McLeod explains, "For Gurū Nānak, the key to an understanding of man's nature is an understanding of the human faculty which is called the *man*. Cleanse the *man* and it becomes a fitting abode for the Name. Control it and you will no more wander from the one with whom you seek union. But let it retain its impurity, let it remain unbridled, and the penalty will be death."²²⁴

By gathering meanings of *man* from the actual contexts in which the term has been used, McLeod arrives at the conclusion that *man* in the compositions of Guru Nanak covers a very wide range of meanings. According to the changing contexts, "*Man* is mind, heart, soul. It is the faculty with which one thinks decides, and feels, the source of all human good and evil, and that one indestructible attribute which must be released from the body and merged in the being of God."²²⁵

Explaining the fatal consequences following from the influence of *haumai* as emphasized by Guru Nanak, McLeod relates, "For Gurū Nānak it is *haumai* which controls the *man* of unregenerate man and so determines the pattern of his life. The results are disastrous, for instead of leading a man to release and salvation his *haumai* will invariably stimulate affections which can only bind him more firmly to the wheel of transmigration."²²⁶

Having given various possible meanings of the term *haumai*, such as 'ego', 'sin', 'self', etc. McLeod arrives at the conclusion that it can more appropriately be understood as 'self-centredness' with certain qualifications. The author says, "This leaves us with 'self centredness' which is perhaps best available, but which is nevertheless unsatisfactory in that it will frequently

224. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

225. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

226. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

impart a weaker and more limited meaning than that which *haumai* was intended to give."²²⁷

Explicating the nature and meaning of *maya* as held in Sikhism, McLeod expresses, "*Māyā* in the thought of Gurū Nānak is not cosmic illusion of classical Vedānta. The world is indeed *māyā*, but it is not unreal. It is an illusion only in the sense that it is accepted for what it is not. Delusion is a more appropriate word. The essence of the world is its impermanence. It is real, but it is impermanent, both in the sense that it is itself perishable and in the sense that its attributes cannot follow a man after his physical death."²²⁸

Describing the fate of unregenerate man as elaborated by Guru Nanak, McLeod enunciates, "Submission to one's *haumai* and entanglement in *māyā* earn a *karma* which perpetuates the transmigratory process. In the constant coming and going there is separation from God and this is death."²²⁹

Man can escape from such a fate by following the path of liberation as revealed to him. How God expresses His Being to man and communicates with him is an aspect of Sikh theology which has not been deeply probed by any serious scholar so far. McLeod's reconstruction in this regard is an original attempt to systematize the Sikh notion of revelation. In order to determine the mode of revelation entertained in the Sikh theology McLeod attempts an analysis of the six key terms i.e. word (*Sabad*), Name (*Nām*), Divine Preceptor (*Gurū*), Divine Order (*Hukam*), Truth (*Sach*), and Grace (*Nadar*). Commenting on the interrelationship and meaning of these terms McLeod says, "Of these the first five bear a basic identity. In them we have five different words, but we do not have five radically different concepts. Instead we have five different aspects of a single all-embracing concept. This single concept is perhaps best expressed by the last of them, *Sach* or Truth, but in itself the word obviously has little substance and can only acquire it in the context of Gurū Nānak's usage. Frequently these words are used in ways which render them synonymous. All five are expressions of God; all are used to expound the nature, content, and method of the divine communication to

227. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

228. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

229. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

men, of the divine truth which when appropriated brings salvation; all share a fundamental identity."²³⁰

In Sikhism the Word no longer means the mystical sound as of the Nath Yogis. According to McLeod, "Gurū Nānak's emphasis is wholly upon the concept of the word (*Sabad*) as the vehicle of revelation. Inevitably, the word is described by him more in terms of what it does than in terms of what it actually is." The author goes on to explain, "This is entirely natural as it is the function which concerns him and it is in experience that it is to be known rather than in any purely intellectual sense. The function of the word is that it provides the means whereby man can know both God and the path which leads to Him, the means whereby the individual may secure release from bonds and so to attain union with God."²³¹ Only serious objection to McLeod's interpretation of the Sikh theory of revelation comes from the Vein *Sākhī*, which describes Guru Nanak's divine call during his immersion in Vein stream, near Sultanpur Lodhi. But McLeod dismisses it saying, "The *Sākhī* obviously owes much to a reverent imagination but there is no need to doubt that Gurū Nānak as a young man did experience a definite sense of call."²³²

Regarding the meaning of Name in the teachings of Guru Nanak, McLeod affirms, "for all practical purposes Name (*Nām*) is synonymous with word (*Sabad*)."²³³ Referring to the little distinction between the meanings of these two terms in some contexts, McLeod holds, "In such cases the Word appears as the medium of communication and the Name as the object of communication. Both remain, however, expressions of God's Truth and the distinction is very fine one, normally determined by the context. Almost invariably Truth 'as mediated by the *Gurū* is referred to as the Word, whereas the Truth as received and meditated on by the believer tends to be expressed in terms of the Name. *Guru Kā Sabad* and *Nām Japnā* are both thoroughly characteristic expressions. There is, however, no basic difference involved and occasionally one of the two is used where the other would be expected."²³⁴

230. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 190.

231. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

232. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

233. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

234. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96.

With respect to the meaning of *Guru* in Sikhism, McLeod concludes, "The *Gurū* accordingly is God; the *Gurū* is the voice of God; and the *Gurū* is the word, The Truth of God. Gurū Nānak uses the term in all three senses."²³⁵

Elaborating the meaning of *Hukam* in Sikhism in opposition to the Islamic understanding of the belief, McLeod maintains, "*Hukam* has usually been translated as 'Will'. This is a literal translation, but it is unsuitable in the context of Gurū Nānak's usage for it fails to convey his precise meaning and is liable to be equated with the Islamic doctrine of the will of God. In the thought of Gurū Nānak the *Hukam* signifies the divinely instituted and maintained principle governing the existence and movement of the universe. It is a constant principle, and to the extent to which it can be comprehended it functions according to a predictable pattern. This regularity and this consistency distinguish it from the Islamic concept. In Islam the Divine Will, if not, actually capricious is at least 'unpledged', whereas the *Hukam* of Guru Nanak's usage is definitely pledged and dependable. A better translation is 'divine order'. This too is inadequate, but it comes nearer to Gūru Nānak's concept than 'Will' and it is not liable to be confused with the will of Islam."²³⁶ Summing up his discussion of *Hukam* McLeod states, "The divine order, the *Hukam*, is accordingly an all-embracing principle, the sum total of all divinely instituted laws; and it is revelation of the nature of God. In this latter sense it is identical in meaning with the word (*Sabad*)."²³⁷

The revelation of God is freely given to all men, why only a few make the required response to it. The why of this is to be understood in terms of the operation of grace of God along-with the doctrine of *Karma*. McLeod explains, "In order that the Gurū's voice may be heard there must be a prior gift of perception and this gift comes by the grace of God."²³⁸ He cautions that the Sikh concept of grace is not to be understood in terms of the Christian, more specifically Pauline doctrine of grace. The Christian doctrine implies universal nature whereas

235. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

236. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

237. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

238. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

the Sikh doctrine suggests its individual application."²³⁹ Concluding his discussion of the doctrine of grace McLeod remarks, "God has expressed Himself in the Word which He Himself as Guru communicates to man. If by this grace any man be blessed with the perception which enables him to understand the word he will discern around and within himself the nature of God and the means of attaining union with Him. In this manner the way of salvation is revealed."²⁴⁰

McLeod's analysis of the Sikh spiritual discipline does not add any new dimension to the existing accounts, excepting a better organization and also a discussion of the five *khandas*: the spiritual stages, mentioned in the Japuji of Guru Nanak. McLeod's analysis of the Sikh beliefs thus is far more exhaustive, profound and systematic than any other earlier scholar.

Alongwith McLeod, Cole is also contributing substantially to the propagation and development of the Sikh studies for several years now. His book, the *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* is a best introduction to Sikhism available in English, covering all the major aspects. He wrote his M.Phil and Ph.D. dissertations in the area of Sikh studies and both these dissertations are now published in the book form. Cole is the first Western scholar to have made a book length study of the Sikh idea and institution of the Guru, now published under the title *The Guru in Sikhism*. His Ph.D. thesis *Sikhism and Its Indian context*, endeavours to explore the Sikh attitude to the Indian religious beliefs and practices on the basis of original sources available in English. The learned author's analysis of the Sikh beliefs and practices has been objective as well as sympathetic. The present survey of the Western interpretation of the Sikh beliefs and practices concludes with Owen Cole. However, the Western endeavours to explore the Sikh faith would continue.

In conclusion, we can say, that the inner meaning of faith is revealed through participation; by following the path laid down by the founder, and not merely by attempting rational analysis of the overt manifestations. However, the intellectual analysis is useful so far as it helps to gain an understanding

239. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

240. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

of the inner experience. A scholar, who is also a participant in the faith, has more scope of success in this area. The Western writers on the contrary, were not only non-participants but also foreigner to the historical and cultural tradition. Their earlier acquaintance with Sikhism was because of political reasons. Having come to learn about the tradition and faith, they attempted to describe it. Compared with Islam and Hinduism their description of Sikhism was much more positive. They viewed Sikhism mainly from historical and theological perspectives. Theology being primary concern with them they focused mainly on describing the Sikh idea of God. Earlier Western writers were familiar neither with the primary sources of Sikhism nor with the Sikh community and institutions. Their accounts of the Sikh beliefs and practices, therefore, were neither detailed nor systematic. They attempted to explain the Sikh conceptual terms, in terms of their traditional connotations and failed to trace the distinctive emphasis of the Sikh beliefs and practices. But alongwith this inner dynamism of the Western perspective can also be noticed. With the growing familiarity with the Sikh scriptures, institutions and symbols, the latter accounts became more accurate, detailed and systematic. But their interpretation of Sikh faith remained mainly Western. In it they emphasized more on building Sikh theology than to delineate the meaning of these ideas, for the Sikhs.

CHAPTER 5

RÉSUMÉ

Our investigation of two centuries of Western writings on Sikhism reveals that inspite of a great variety of views among the Western writers it forms a consistent, independent tradition of interpretation and a perspective on Sikhism. A large number of authors from different areas of thought and activity with varying degrees of interest and competence have contributed to the formation and growth of this tradition. In addition to the common historical, cultural and religious heritage of the Western people, the other factors which lent support to the unity of the tradition were their commercial, political and evangelistic interests in the East. The contributions of the individual authors form inseparable part of the tradition. The latter studies are not only based on the earlier ones, but they are conscious efforts to improve or disapprove them. If the latter studies are relatively more accurate, detailed and systematic it was only because of the existence of the earlier studies. Our survey of the Western writings also conclusively prove that the Western tradition ever since its small beginning has consistently evolved through all these years.

There were a number of inherent limitations for the Western writers to gain adequate and proper grasping of the Indian religions. Their understanding of the religious life and thought was largely conditioned by their own Judeo-Christian tradition. Their distinctive notions of history, cosmology and eschatology distinguish their tradition from the Eastern religions. Their belief in superiority of the Christian revelation and evangelistic interests further obscured the truth of Indian religions from them. The earlier Western writers were familiar neither with culture nor with the original sources of Indian religions. Moreover, their first encounter with the Indian religions was mainly inspired by the non-religious concerns. All

these characteristic features form inseparable part of the Western perspective on Indian religions. Most of these limitations persisted even when they became genuinely interested in the study of Indian religions. The Western writers' interpretation of the Sikh tradition and faith is greatly indebted to their own tradition of historical and theological analysis. In their endeavour to elucidate the historical role of Sikhism, they have striven to determine the place and role of Sikhism among the Indian religions. The main issues which came to be discussed and elaborated in this context are the historical origins of the Sikh tradition, life history of the founder of the faith, relation of Sikhism to its historical background, evolution of the Sikh tradition, place of Sikhism among the religions of the world and analysis of the Sikh beliefs and practices in relation to the doctrines and practices of the preceding religious traditions.

Majority of the Western writers have represented Sikhism as a response to the prevailing disorderly and chaotic religious conditions in India. In this respect they emphasized the reformatory character of Sikhism. According to their assessment, Sikhism aimed at synthesizing the positive elements from both the Hindu and the Islamic traditions, having universal appeal and validity. Beyond this point they failed to perceive the originality of the vision and mission of Guru Nanak.

Their description and analysis of the Sikh tenets and practices was aimed at building the Sikh theology. In accordance with the basic nature of the theological analysis, they attempted to determine and define the nature of deity in Sikhism. Almost all the writers have underlined the Sikh emphasis on the unity of God, but the nature of this unity has remained a subject of controversy among them. Having delineating the nature of God they endeavoured to explain all the other tenets in relation to this basic doctrine. The Sikh emphasis on the place and role of Guru has been recognised by all the authors. However, they failed to grasp the true nature of the Guru in Sikhism and sought to explain it in terms of the prevailing notions of the *sant*, *bhakta* or a religious reformer, etc. The notion of the Guru as held by the Sikhs and elaborated in their traditional literature remained mostly unexplored by these writers. Trumpp, Greenlees and McLeod have attempted to provide systematic accounts of the Sikh theology on the lines of Christian theology, but Macnicol

and Archer have complained of the absence of a consistent belief-system in Sikhism. However, in comparison with the devotional movements of medieval India all these authors have found Sikh belief-system to be more consistent and coherent. In this connection, the Western writers could not realize the Sikh emphasis on the practical religious life in opposition to dogmatic confessions.

Among the Sikh religious practices which have come to be discussed and deliberated by these writers are the recitation of the name of God, reverence to the Guru, emphasis on the active social life, service of the humanity, equality of the status of women, absence of untouchability, mode of initiation, dress and symbols of the community, etc. The Sikh rejection of the doctrine of *avtāra*, caste system, the practices of idolatory, sacrificial rituals, priestcraft, ritualistic bathing at places of pilgrimages, etc. have also been noticed by these writers. The reformatory character of the Sikh tenets and practices have been constantly reiterated. However, in their analysis, the main focus of the Western writers has remained on the overt manifestations and the inner life of faith, spiritual discipline and devotional and mystical dimensions have remained untouched most of the time.

In comparison with the Hindu and the Islamic traditions their appreciation and admiration of the Sikh tradition was far more greater. They have all praise for the person and the mission of Guru Nanak. But excepting a few of them, they miserably failed to appreciate the growth and flowering of the same spirit in the succeeding Gurus and the latter phases of the life of the community.

It was through the efforts of the Western writers that Sikhism came to be introduced to the Western people. They conceived a great positive role for Sikhism in the ever increasing encounter and interaction of the religions of the world. On the other hand, Western studies of Sikhism have influenced the method and orientation of the Sikh studies to a larger extent. It is because of the influence of the Western studies that the method of historical and theological analysis came to be adopted in the area of the Sikh studies. The Western writers awakened the Sikhs to their special responsibility and role among the religious communities of the world. The rise of the Sikh resurgence in the later half of the nineteenth century was solely because of the influence and challenge of the Western studies of Sikhism.

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